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VANCOUVER 2010 Games

City readies for possible takeover of Village funding

OLYMPICS Vancouver is moving ahead with a plan that could see it takeover funding of the Olympic Village.

City councillors voted unanimously Thursday to cover a fifth emergency draw that will keep construction rolling on the roughly $1-billion development.

The advance will be paid in mid-February and will be taken from developer Millennium's $29-million deposit.

The city's director of finance will work out a plan to issue debt and to create "banking facility," allowing the city to borrow money from a different lender at interest rates of about five per cent — significantly less than its current 9.5 per cent rate.

Vancouver has already paid $100 million to cover construction costs after financier Fortress Capital stopped advancing funds to the project in the fall.

JEFF HODSON/METRO VANCOUVER

World pg 8

Obama orders Gitmo closure

Celebrity Buzz pg 30

Jen plans bash for the big 4-0

Academy Awards **And the nominees are...**

PHIL MCCARTEN/REUTERS

Actor Forest Whitaker, left, and Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences president Sid Ganis announce the contenders in the best actress category at the Academy Awards nominee announcements in Beverly Hills, Calif., yesterday. Among the nominees, clockwise from bottom left, are Anne Hathaway, Angelina Jolie, Melissa Leo, Meryl Streep and Kate Winslet. Coverage, pgs 22, 29

Tories plan to go $64 billion in red

Early deficit details get backing from Bank of Canada chief

The federal government is set to plunge deep into deficit — predicting shortfalls of $64 billion over two years — as it dramatically boosts spending to revive Canada's economy.

A senior government official, in advance of Tuesday's budget, announced Thursday that pro-growth spending and tax measures in the budget will drive this year's deficit to $34 billion.

That will be followed by a $30 billion shortfall in 2010-11, the official told the media yesterday, and Ottawa won't see a budget surplus for at least five years.

Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney said the government's plan will help Canada quickly leave the global recession behind.

In his latest forecast, Carney said the economy is currently in a severe recession but will begin to bounce back in the second half of this year — partly as a result of Ottawa's economic stimulus strategy.

The deficit is "predominantly" the result of new spending initiatives to restore consumer confidence and keep Canadians working, said the official, who asked not to be named. But falling government revenues, blamed on sagging corporate and individual tax returns, also contribute to the deficit, he said.

"We are designing our action plan to ensure that these deficits are truly short term and not permanent," the official added. "If your spending is short term in nature and programs are time limited, you can predict with much greater degree of certainty that you will not run (a permanent deficit.)" TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Stimulus numbers

- As the government is facing an estimated deficit of $10 billion to $15 billion this year before additional spending measures, the stimulus package should be worth about $20 billion or more in 2009-10.

Police reassign, suspend 2 of 3 arrested cops

JEFF HODSON
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INVESTIGATION A Lower Mainland police officer was suspended with pay and another was reassigned to desk duty Thursday after being arrested for allegedly assaulting and robbing a newspaper deliveryman in downtown Vancouver.

Three off-duty officers from New Westminster, West Vancouver and Delta police services were arrested outside the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Burrard Street early Wednesday morning following an altercation with a 47-year-old Surrey man.

It is believed the man was delivering the National Post.

The police officers were held in custody all day and were released Wednesday night without charges.

On Thursday, New West police said a 38-year-old, fourth-year member of the force would be suspended with pay.

The suspension was immediate and will be reviewed within 30 days by the New Westminster Police Board. The department's professional standards section was also investigating.

Later in the day, West Vancouver police announced that in light of the allegations, a junior constable with one-and-a-half years' experience was assigned to desk duty.

The Delta officer was off-duty Thursday and at press time, Police Chief Jim Cessford was weighing what action, if any, would be taken.

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Wednesday's 6-49 up to $33 million
Vancouver lottery retailers are expected to have a busy weekend as the 6-49 jackpot was left unclaimed in Wednesday's $33-million draw. Saturday's draw is estimated to be $43 million. METRO VANCOUVER

Local

Campaign wants Betty Fox to light torch

A Facebook campaign that has attracted more than 9,000 members is calling for Betty Fox, the mother of Canadian hero Terry Fox, to light the Olympic Flame. Fox, left, who was raised in Port Coquitlam, attempted to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research in 1980. He died of cancer before completing his journey, but the Marathon of Hope has become an annual event that has raised more than $400 million for cancer research. METRO VANCOUVER

Cops say gunfire a 'grow-rip' gone bad

JEFF HODSON
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INJURY A 42-year-old man was shot in the torso during an early morning robbery at a marijuana grow-operation in rural Abbotsford on Thursday, police said.

The man is in hospital and is expected to undergo surgery. The shooting is not believed to be related to an attempted hit on alleged gangster Jamie Bacon in Abbotsford on Tuesday.

"All indications are that this was a grow-rip that went bad," Const. Casey Vinet, a spokesman for Abbotsford police, said in a release.

Police arrived at a property in the 28200 block of Huntington Road at 1:45 a.m. and discovered a 42-year-old man at the front of the house, bleeding from a gunshot wound.

A police dog located two other men at the back of the property. The men had been restrained in an outbuilding with plastic "zap straps" but had managed to escape.

The two were uninjured and are being questioned. Police are looking for two suspects who were wearing masks at the time of the shooting.

Theft

- A red Chevy Avalanche was stolen from the property and was recovered in Surrey on Thursday morning.

Lawsuits over bucked condo deal

Lawyer for pair who left deal says market dip driving developers' suit

KRISTEN THOMPSON
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A North Vancouver couple that withdrew from its pre-sale condominium contract is being sued by the developers in a move that's likely motivated by the economic crisis, the couple's lawyer says.

John Whyte, who is representing the couple, said that in a healthier market, a vendor likely wouldn't "engage in litigation" over a dropped contract.

"In a rising market, if someone chose not to complete a real-estate (transaction), it's no skin off the vendor's nose because they know they can get another buyer," Whyte said.

"But if the market is going the other way ... then they stand the possibility of suffering a loss.

"I anticipate that one is going to see a lot more cases like that."

The dispute arose in December 2007 when the couple put down a deposit with Amacon real-estate developers for a unit in Surrey's Morgan Heights development.

"I anticipate that one is going to see a lot more cases like that."
Lawyer John Whyte

Whyte said when they later rescinded the deal, Amacon sued them for the deposit, plus interest and damages.

Whyte said according to the Real Estate Development Marketing Act, if developers don't deliver amendments to disclosure statements — which his clients claim they never received — the purchaser is no longer bound by the terms of the contract.

As a result the couple is counter-suing to have its deposit returned.

Fundraiser **Good taste**

KRISTEN THOMPSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Kal Suurkask, left, and Regan Schwartz toast to the second annual Taste B.C. fundraiser at Vancouver's Hyatt Regency Hotel on Thursday. Proceeds go toward the B.C. Children's Hospital.

B.C. trees dying faster in warming climate: Study

TEMPERATURES Trees in British Columbia and in the western United States are dying twice as quickly as they did just 30 years ago, with rising average temperatures almost certainly to blame, researchers reported Thursday.

These thinner and weaker forests will become more vulnerable to wildfires and may soak up less carbon dioxide, in turn speeding up global warming, they said.

The Canadian and U.S. researchers studied trees in old-growth forests for more than 50 years to document the die-off, which they say is beginning to outpace replacement by new trees.

Warmer temperatures may be encouraging pine beetles and other organisms that attack trees, the researchers said. That, along with the stress of prolonged droughts, may be accelerating death rates.

"Average temperature in the West rose by more than 0.5 C over the last few decades," said Phillip van Mantgem of the U.S. Geological Survey, who helped lead the study.

0.5 The average temperature rise degrees Celsius in the West over the last few decades, according to Phillip van Mantgem of the U.S. Geological Survey.

"While this may not sound like much, it has been enough to reduce winter snowpack, cause earlier snowmelt, and lengthen the summer drought."

Writing in the journal Science, the researchers said they found trees of various species, ages and sizes are dying faster at every elevation.

REUTERS

VANOC readmits merch factories

GAMES Organizers of Vancouver's 2010 Games banned six factories from producing Olympic merchandise in 2007-2008, but readmitted five of those factories after infractions were corrected, VANOC said Thursday.

According to a sustainability report, VANOC conducted 187 licensee audits last year, banning six factories and implementing 148 "corrective action plans for continual improvement."

VANOC also banned six factories in 2006-2007.

The sustainability snapshot reported all of the 89 suppliers met Canadian human rights standards.

JEFF HODSON/METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

MEMORIAL A public memorial for MLA Stan Hagen is being held on Saturday in Courtenay. Hagen, who was also minister of Agriculture and Lands, died suddenly on Tuesday. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Hagen's name to the Comox Valley Community Foundation.

SEX PARTY The B.C. Sex Party announced on Thursday it's seeking candidates ahead of the spring election. Party leader John Ince said the candidate roster will close in the first week of February and anyone interested in joining can e-mail info@thesexparty.ca.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

metronews.ca
WHAT'S ONLINE TODAY

Video Police investigate shooting on Toronto subway platform at **metronews.ca/canada**

Video Vancouver Taser inquiry hears from victim's mother at **metronews.ca/canada**

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Stanley Park Seawall set to reopen after storms

The Stanley Park Seawall is expected to reopen to pedestrians and cyclists Friday. Some of the slopes above the Seawall were destabilized and debris littered the walkway after winter storms at the end of 2008. **NEWS1130.COM**

Fog to drift away by Friday

KRISTEN THOMPSON
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SUBMITTED PHOTO / GROUSE MOUNTAIN RESORTS LTD.

A skier on Grouse Mountain takes in the view of Vancouver shrouded in fog.

It sounds like a contradiction in terms — one of the driest Januarys in years has also been one of the greyest.

For the past 18 days, it's looked more like the East Coast than the West Coast outside, and when the sun finally makes its expected return on Friday, it'll be the most light we've had all month.

Lisa Coldwells, a meteorologist with Environment Canada, said there's only been 6½ hours of bright sunshine in the Lower Mainland this month.

The January average is 60 hours of sunshine.

Another surprise, she added, is that despite all the fog, we didn't break any records.

"The record year was 1985, when there were 21 days of fog," said Coldwells. "So we came close."

The unusual amount of haze was a result of a stagnant air mass that sat stubbornly over southern B.C. for more than two weeks.

"In January, we'd normally have Pacific systems moving in off the coast and a lot of movement of the air," Coldwells said.

"We're going to replace that (stagnant air) with cold arctic air draining down from the Yukon," she said. That will bring colder temperatures with sunny breaks, and possibly even flurries on Sunday.

Officer did her job in handling Dziekanski case, inquiry hears

BRAIDWOOD A border officer who was at the Vancouver International Airport the day Robert Dziekanski died said Thursday she did her job and that she wouldn't have done anything differently.

Tina Zadravec — in a tearful testimony — told the Braidwood Inquiry into the death that she did answer a call from a friend of Dziekanski's mother, Zofia Cisowski, on Oct. 13, 2007.

She suggested to Rick Hutchinson that Dziekanski wasn't at the airport based on a quick scan of several spots in a secondary screening area and that he and Cisowski should go home to Kamloops, CBC News Online reports.

Later that day, Zadravec did see Dziekanski and alerted a co-worker but did not contact Cisowski or ask other officers to do so.

When lawyers for the RCMP asked Zadravec about her December 2007 statement where she said Dziekanski appeared drunk, his mother yelled out, "Liar!" Autopsy results showed Dziekanski was sober and not on drugs at the time of the incident.

After spending several hours looking for his mother, the Polish immigrant became agitated. Four RCMP officers responded and Tasered him multiple times. Dziekanski died shortly after.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

News in brief

FIRE One man has died after a house fire in east Vancouver, police said . A man in his 50s was found inside the three-storey home after the fire broke out around 8:30 p.m. Wednesday night. Neighbours said the man was the caretaker and was supposed to have moved out earlier that day so the house could be renovated. Investigators are still trying to determine the cause.

PLANTS Thirteen plants made the list of offenders released Thursday by the the Invasive Plant Council of B.C. The invading aliens, which include the English ivy and Himalayan blackberry, are beating native plants to space, sun and water.

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Exploits River threatens N.L. town again

People in Badger, N.L., are keeping a round-the-clock watch on the Exploits River, which flooded in 2003 with water quickly turning to ice and putting the town into a state of emergency. Badger Mayor Bill Foley said the river is threatening to overflow again. **CBC NEWS ONLINE**

Canada

Blowin' in the wind

The government of Ontario was expected to announce Friday another $1.3-billion worth of renewable-energy projects, most of it wind, as part of its ongoing effort to green up the province's power mix, Torstar News Service has learned. Ontario expects to have 1,200 megawatts of wind power capacity in operation this summer. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

BRIAN TOWIE/METRO CANADA

Other Half co-chairs Susan Go, left, and Amy Tam talk about Chinese stem cell donations at a Thursday news conference in Toronto.

Waiting for a match

BRIAN TOWIE
Metro Canada

HEALTH Shu Yi Fung knows how important and difficult it is to find a stem cell match to help cure her leukemia.

The Chinese-Canadian has been waiting for a donor for the past year-and-a-half in order to receive a bone marrow transplant.

But with no match found among her siblings, Fung faces a less than 10 per cent chance of finding a match, like other people of Chinese origin awaiting the procedure.

> **"I'm appealing on behalf of all leukemia patients to all you healthy people."**
> Shu Yi Fung

Comparatively, Caucasian patients have an 80 per cent success rate. That's because ethnic Chinese are direly under-represented on worldwide donor networks.

That's why Fung hopes her fellow Chinese can help by registering with OneMatch, a national stem cell and marrow network.

"It would be a very precious gift for us during our Chinese Lunar New Year," Fung said in a statement at a news conference.

"I'm appealing on behalf of all leukemia patients to all you healthy people."

It's a state of affairs that Other Half, a group of concerned Chinese-Canadians spearheading this campaign, wants to change.

Partnering with OneMatch, the group is working to get out the word on how important it is for Canada's Chinese community to register on OneMatch's database.

For more information, visit www.onematch.ca or www.chinesestemcell.ca.

Hormone therapy fears unfounded, MDs say

Hormone therapy is a safe and viable option for some Canadian women who want relief from hot flashes, night sweats and other severe symptoms of menopause, a panel of experts said Thursday.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada said women and doctors have been needlessly frightened away from hormone therapy after rafts of troubling reports linked it with an increased risk for breast cancer, heart attacks and strokes.

But new research — and reanalysis of old evidence — has found short-term use of hormone therapy by women early in menopause is the most effective way to alleviate symptoms of menopause and has "little appreciable effect on risk," said Robert Reid, a co-author of the guidelines and chair of the division of reproductive endocrinology and infertility at Queen's University.

Hormone therapy has been embroiled in controversy since the U.S. National Institutes of Health suddenly stopped the Women's Health Initiative trial in July 2002 after investigators linked the drugs with higher rates of breast cancer, heart attacks and stroke.

> **"Cardiovascular risk does not apply to women between the age of 50 and 60."**
> Robert Reid

This is the third time since 2002 the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) has backed hormone therapy to alleviate menopause symptoms for some women.

Short-term use of hormone therapy in early menopause does not increase the risk of heart disease, SOGC says, and has "little appreciable effect" on breast cancer risk if used for five years or less.

"Cardiovascular risk does not apply to women between the age of 50 and 60," said Reid.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Piercing condoms not sexual assault: Judge

DECISION A Dartmouth, N.S., man who put holes in his girlfriend's condoms in an attempt to get her pregnant didn't sexually assault her, a Nova Scotia Supreme Court judge ruled Thursday.

Craig Jaret Hutchinson, 38, had been charged with aggravated sexual assault in the case. Justice Gerald Moir acquitted him, ruling Hutchinson, who sabotaged the condoms after his girlfriend began suggesting she wanted to break up, didn't expose her to a "significant risk" of physical harm.

> **"The evidence suggests Mr. Hutchinson did something that was not only fraudulent, it was dastardly."**
> Justice Gerald Moir

"The evidence suggests Mr. Hutchinson did something that was not only fraudulent, it was dastardly — but it does not prove sexual assault," Moir said.

"Whether it proves some other crime, I don't know."

RACHEL BOOMER/METRO CANADA

Canadians must make tough choices: Layton

ECONOMY With the country facing the worst recession in 70 years, Canadians have tough choices to make — including, for some, taking pay cuts so others can continue to work, NDP Leader Jack Layton says.

"It's that courage of the Canadian people which makes our country strong. Let's match that quiet courage with smart investments for the future. Investments that build on our productivity, not squander our prosperity," Layton said in a speech delivered Friday to the Toronto Board of Trade.

It's that kind of courage workers will need "to take a pay cut so your friends at the plant can keep their job," Layton said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Points

- Layton said Ottawa needs to focus its spending on infrastructure, protecting key areas of the economy and income security for workers affected by the economic crisis.

ShareYourViews
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News in brief

SHOOTING The daytime shooting of a man on a Toronto subway platform Thursday disrupted downtown commuter traffic for hours. The 19-year-old victim, whose name was not released, was rushed to hospital and was listed in serious condition. Police are searching for a suspect, and say the victim is cooperating.

ALBERTA A Drumheller prison was put under lockdown Thursday after an inmate was attacked. The 36-year-old was rushed to hospital after he was discovered injured at about 8 a.m. As of Thursday afternoon, he was in hospital in stable condition.

SASKATCHEWAN A second man has been charged in connection with a shooting that injured a six-year-old girl in Saskatoon last week, CBC News Online reports. The girl has been in hospital since the shooting last Friday night. According to the Saskatoon StarPhoenix, the girl suffered a head wound. She's listed in stable condition.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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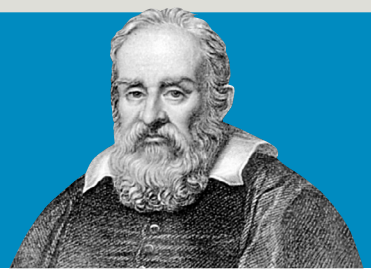
37.8 million inauguration viewers still lower than expected
Almost 37.8 million Americans watched the full day of television coverage of U.S. President Barack Obama's inauguration from their homes — less than the record numbers expected. REUTERS

World



Looking through Galileo's eyes

Italian and British scientists want to exhume the body of 16th century astronomer Galileo for DNA tests to determine if his severe vision problems may have affected some of his findings. "If we knew exactly what was wrong with his eyes, we could use computer models to recreate what he saw in his telescope," said Paolo Galluzzi, director of the Museum of History and Science in Florence, the city where Galileo is buried. REUTERS

U.S. House panel approves $304B stimulus

FUNDING A House panel approved Thursday a $304-billion US package of business and individual tax breaks and aid to the unemployed that is to be part of the huge $825-billion economic stimulus sought by U.S. President Barack Obama.

The tax writing House Ways and Means Committee approved the package, which provides $275 billion in tax breaks, on a largely party-line vote.

Vote approaches

- The tax break package will be combined with other elements of the proposed stimulus, which the House is expected to vote on next week.

The package includes a temporary refundable tax credit for workers, up to $500 per individual and $1,000 per couple.

It also includes tax incentives for renewable energy and allows builders and other companies to write off current losses against five previous tax years. Currently, businesses can write off losses against two previous years.

The bill also provides money to help the unemployed keep health insurance coverage. REUTERS

News in brief

CHURCH Pope Benedict will soon lift the excommunication on four traditionalist bishops, in his latest attempt to heal a 20-year-old schism in the Roman Catholic Church, an Italian paper said Thursday. In 1998, the late French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre illegally consecrated four bishops without permission from the late Pope John Paul, resulting in self-imposed excommunication, which was later sealed with an official decree by the Vatican Church.

POLITICS Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice has signed on with the William Morris Agency which will represent her for books and lecture appearances. It's unlikely that Rice will turn up as a talking head on television, however. The deal includes William Morris representation for philanthropic initiatives, as well as business initiatives in media, sports and communications, an agency representative said Thursday. REUTERS

KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

U.S. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton chat Thursday after remarks at the State Department in Washington, D.C.

Obama focuses on tarnished U.S. image

U.S. President Barack Obama ordered Thursday the closing of Guantanamo prison and named foreign policy troubleshooters for the Middle East and Iran as he moves to repair America's tarnished image.

Obama set a one-year deadline for shutting Guantanamo and barred harsh treatment of terrorism suspects held there.

The prison in Cuba — where prisoners have been detained for years without charges, some subjected what human rights groups say amounted to torture — had damaged America's moral standing.

Obama waded further into his foreign policy plans by paying a visit to the State Department to welcome Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

His foreign policy goals include pursuing broader engagement overseas than the Bush administration, which was criticized for go-it-alone "cowboy diplomacy, and refocusing the fight against terrorism away from the Iraq war toward Afghanistan.

He yesterday named George Mitchell, a former senator, as an envoy who will try to jump-start Arab-Israeli peace talks. He also tapped former ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and related issues. REUTERS

Iraq prepared

- Iraq's military is "prepared for the worst" if Obama orders a swift withdrawal of U.S. troops, its defence minister said.

Clinton vows new era in diplomacy

FOREIGN POLICY Hillary Clinton took the helm at the State Department on Thursday, promising a new era in U.S. diplomacy, but tough times ahead.

About 1,000 employees cheered when Clinton arrived for her first full day as secretary of state.

"I will do all that I can working with you to make it abundantly clear that robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing America's future," Clinton said.

Clinton won Senate approval Wednesday despite concerns about the fundraising activities of her husband, former president Bill Clinton. REUTERS

UN launches Gaza relief efforts

MIDDLE EAST The UN is launching a major aid effort to help tens of thousands of children in the aftermath of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, a top aid official said Thursday.

"We are scaling up our humanitarian support and looking to expand significantly our psychosocial support. The situation is very dire," said Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"We are scaling up our humanitarian support ... The situation is very dire."
Sigrid Kaag, UNICEF

Kaag said children, who form the majority of the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, bore the brunt of the onslaught.

More than 400 children were among the 1,314 Palestinians killed and more than 1,800 children were injured, many suffering amputations or severe burns.

UNICEF aims to offer mass counselling and first aid. UN technical teams are aiming to open schools by mid-February and to repair quickly key water supply systems damaged by the bombing. REUTERS

48 whales die in beaching in Tasmania
A pod of 50 sperm whales beached themselves on Australia's southern island state of Tasmania overnight, but only two survived. Wildlife officials said it was difficult for rescuers to reach the pod due to their location, which is only accessible by boat, and the high tide. REUTERS

Natural disasters cost China $110B in '09

Natural disasters caused nearly $110 billion US of damage in China last year, a warning to other emerging economies ill-prepared for potential hazards, the United Nations said Thursday.

A May earthquake in Sichuan and extreme weather made China the most disaster-affected country in economic terms in 2008, said the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

The UN body said the world economy suffered a $181-billion blow from naturally-occurring events such as floods, storms, volcanic eruptions, wildfires and droughts in 2008. Much of the devastation was avoidable, said ISDR Director Salvano Briceno.

"These losses could have been substantially reduced if buildings in China, particularly schools and hospitals, had been built to be more earthquake-resilient," he said.

Though disasters were less frequent than in past years, the Sichuan quake and Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar in May made 2008 the most deadly since 2004, when a tsunami devastated Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand.

A total of 235,816 people were killed in 2008, compared with 16,871 the year before. The costs were more than double the 2007 damages of $75 billion.

The centre which compiled the data said the costs should serve as a lesson to India, Iran, Turkey, and other middle-income nations which are building infrastructure rapidly. REUTERS

Most worldwide

- China also had the highest number of disasters last year, with 26 recorded. The Philippines was next with 20, followed by the United States with 19 and Indonesia with 16.

Pope to repeal excommunication

CHURCH Pope Benedict will soon lift the excommunication on four traditionalist bishops, in his latest attempt to heal a 20-year-old schism in the Roman Catholic Church, an Italian paper said on Thursday.

It would be a major gesture by Benedict to resolve a crisis in the Church that surfaced in 1998, when the late French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre illegally consecrated four bishops without the requisite permission of the late Pope John Paul.

The result was self-imposed excommunication, or a total cut-off from the Church, which was later made formal by a Vatican decree. REUTERS

News in brief

MEDICINE Drug and medical device manufacturers would need to publicly disclose all doctor payments and gifts exceeding $100 US per year under U.S. legislation unveiled Thursday. Companies would face penalties as high as $1 million for knowingly failing to report the payments if the bill becomes law. The effort is meant to shine light on the industry's lavish gifts to doctors, which range from pricey dinners to golf vacations, as well as consulting and speaking fees. Critics have said the payments may skew doctors' decision-making. REUTERS

Russia, Georgia must probe war crimes: Group

CONFLICT A leading rights watchdog urged Russia and Georgia on Friday to investigate indiscriminate attacks and human rights violations, including possible war crimes, committed during their war last year.

Human Rights Watch released a report documenting attacks on civilians during the five-day conflict when Russia repelled a Georgian assault on South Ossetia,a pro-Russian region that threw off Tbilisi's rule in the early 1990s.

"Both Georgia and Russia should undertake an impartial and thorough investigation into abuses committed by their forces," said a statement issued with the report.

The attacks in question include Georgia's assault with multiple rocket-launchers, which can fire up to 40 rockets in 20 seconds, on the separatist capital Tskhinvali, alleged ethnic cleansing by South Ossetian forces, Russian bombing of apartment buildings and the use of cluster munitions by both sides.

Russia and former Soviet Georgia deny using excessive force or targeting civilians. South Ossetia's separatist authorities have also denied targeting ethnic Georgian citizens. REUTERS

Obama's spy chief pick sees opportunity in Iran

INTEL U.S. intelligence agencies should seek ways of working with Islamic leaders and countries such as Iran on issues of mutual interest, President Barack Obama's choice for spy chief said Thursday.

Retired adm. Dennis Blair also urged a break with the Bush administration intelligence policies in a Senate hearing for his nomination as director of national intelligence, including applying standards for humane treatment of terrorism suspects.

"Identifying opportunities as well as threats is an extremely important balance for intelligence agencies to strike," Blair said.

"Identifying opportunities as well as threats is an extremely important balance for intelligence agencies to strike."
Retired Adm. Dennis Blair

On Iran, he said, "While policymakers need to understand anti-American leaders, policies and actions in Iran, the intelligence community can also help policymakers identify and understand other leaders and political forces, so that it is possible to work toward a future in both our interests."

The administration of former president George W. Bush had sought to isolate Iran out of concern over its nuclear programs and suspected support for terrorism.

Blair is expected to easily be confirmed by the Senate, but one senator said he had deep concerns about Obama's plans to close the Guantanamo prison. REUTERS

China **Families grieve**

JASON LEE /REUTERS

People whose children died from drinking tainted milk hold sign readings "Give me back my child" outside Shijiazhuang intermediate people's court on Thursday. Two men were sentenced to death for their role in the scandal that killed six children.

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Comment & Views

Comment

Ringing the cellphone alarm

Some data suggests increased brain tumour risk for kids

Marketplace

It's the dream toy of today's kids. Something they can use to play games. Text best friends. Download the latest Jonas Brothers ring-tone. And call mom. That's right, kids today want cellphones. A survey we did of 1,000 Canadian tweens shows that almost half of them already have a cellphone.

Parents like the idea, too. Companies are keen to market cellphones as a security tool, a way to stay on top of children's whereabouts. Some even come with GPS tracking.

Today's kids are set to become the longest-term users of cellphones, starting at younger ages than ever before. Great for the phone business, but some scientists are ringing a cautionary alarm bell.

I've been following the debate about cellphone safety for 15 years. During that time, there have been two huge studies that were supposed to get to the bottom of the question, "Can cellphone radiation cause brain cancer?" The first study was inconclusive, and largely funded by the companies that make phones. I've reported on the fact that most of the research money was spent on public relations, not science, allowing companies to stand behind a wall of inconclusive studies showing phones are safe.

But now there are cracks in that wall. Results from a second big study are trickling out, and some data suggests there is an increased risk of brain tumours. Some scientists say this is cause for concern. Others say the data is flawed.

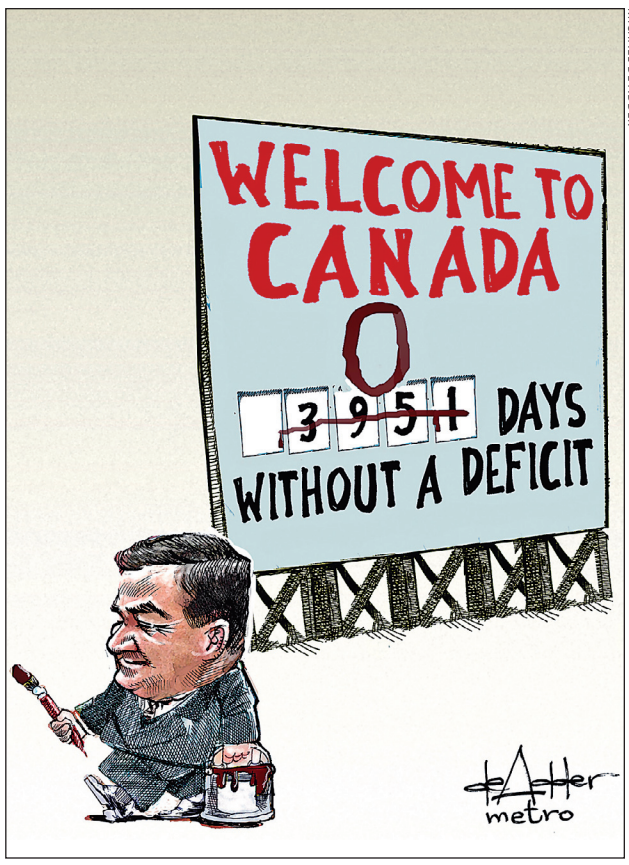
This isn't fringe science. The new data comes from a World Health Organization study. It's the first of its kind to take a look at what happens when people use cellphones over a long period. The final report was due three years ago, but it still hasn't been released because the scientists involved are deeply divided. And, of course, the repercussions are huge. Billions of dollars are at stake.

And that's why there is concern about kids. They are a growing cellphone market, and possibly more vulnerable to cellphone radiation. This year, a Swedish scientist released preliminary data that shows kids who start using phones in their teens have a five-times higher risk of developing brain cancer.

In the last two years, warnings about kids using cellphones have been issued in Germany, the U.K., France, Belgium, Israel, Russia, India and Finland. But in Canada? Even though this new evidence is out, Health Canada still says, "There is currently no convincing evidence of serious health effects."

So, until the answer is clear, what should parents do? Cellphones are a useful tool, but kids could limit their use. Make shorter calls. And remember that phones do emit radiation, so try to hold it a few centimetres from your head. Until we know more, a little bit of caution can't hurt anyone.

Wendy Mesley is a co-host of CBC News: Marketplace, Canada's award-winning consumer affairs show, and a regular back-up host with CBC News: The National. CBC News: Marketplace airs each Friday night at 8:30 p.m. (9 p.m. NT) on CBC Television.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

Never-ending traffic woes make for irritating commute

UrbanCompass

Did you ever wonder if those people who routinely rank Vancouver as the number one city in the world have ever been here?

And if they have, do they have to drive to work in the morning?

I found myself wondering about that as I "drove" to work recently, negotiating pylons, barriers, and those uniquely infuriating people with hard hats, cigarettes and stop signs who seem to be in charge of the streets these days. I'm sure my route, which currently takes in no fewer than five lane-closing, street-squeezing mega-projects, is hardly unique. Everywhere across the Lower Mainland, millions of people suffer through various traffic outrages in the name of … what? The 2010 Olympics? Yet another luxury highrise condo development? The latest scheme to make traffic "flow" more "freely?" Another act of God (What have we done to offend Thee)?

It's hard to believe, but when I moved to Vancouver in 1989, none of this had happened. I could drive around as if I was in a normal city. Then, there was an ample supply of street surface parking lots. Now we're a World Class City and all those parking lots have evolved into luxury highrise condos, and parking is only available at a few select locations featuring tiny stalls at world-class hourly rates.

You can be excused for thinking the entire southwest coast of B.C. is one big construction project, because even with the economy in the tank, that's exactly what it is. Did you know that there are currently $62.5 billion in capital projects under construction in B.C. and if you add the cost of those projects still on the drawing board, it comes to 863 projects worth $174.7 billion? That adds up to a lot of pylons.

Much of this activity is stimulated by the 2010 Winter Olympics, but hardly all of it. The most expensive of these mega-speed bumps, at $2 billion, is the so-called Canada Line, even though it really only goes from the SeaBus terminal to the airport. But the next biggest project, the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge and the widening of the Trans-Canada Highway, really has nothing to do with the Olympics and it's worth $1.6 billion. These two are No. 7 and 8 respectively on the list of Canada's top 10 infrastructure projects; in all, B.C. is the site of 22 of the top 100 infrastructure projects in Canada.

No wonder the traffic trolls have taken over. Sometimes I think it will never be done and we'll never get back to 1989. Other times, I get really depressed and think it will. What are we going to do with all those pylons?

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting.

Worth mentioning

Worm gene offers clues to nerve cell repair: Study

Researchers believe they have found a potential way to regenerate nerves by stimulating a gene and said Thursday they hope their work in worms may some day help people with spinal cord injuries.

The gene is part of a network, or pathway, of four genes that appear to be essential for nerve repair, they reported in the journal Science.

"We found a pathway that not only regenerates nerves in the worm, but also exists in humans, and we think it serves the same purpose," Michael Bastiani of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, who led the study, said in a statement.

Bastiani said the gene could serve as a target for a future drug that could "vastly improve the ability of a neuron to regenerate after injury."

In humans, nerve fibers in the arms and legs can regenerate, but in the brain and spinal cord, they do not. Many teams are working to understand why.

Bastiani's team looked to nematode worms for clues. Using an advanced research technique called RNA interference, the team systematically blocked the action of 5,000 worm genes to isolate those important for nerve repair.

They found a gene called dlk-1 was essential to the process at every stage of the worm's life.

Curiously, this network of genes is not used by the nervous system during normal development in the embryo, but it is essential for nerve repair after birth. "Most of us believed that virtually everything we found in regeneration also would be involved in development," Bastiani said.

Bastiani and colleagues noted to be effective, the dlk-1 gene must be stimulated soon after injury to make a protein that stimulates repair, suggesting there might be "a time window in which you have to activate this pathway."

Many teams have been working on finding ways to block proteins that inhibit nerve repair in adults. **REUTERS**

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Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Vuitton, Hugo Boss upbeat on Christmas trade 11
Top European fashion houses Louis Vuitton and Hugo Boss said Christmas trading proved robust, sending a comforting message to the retail industry. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Business

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Swift recovery seen

But top bank says sharp contraction this quarter

The Canadian economy will contract by an exceptionally sharp 4.8 per cent in the first quarter of this year and continue to shrink through mid-year, but the recovery will be swifter than in the past two recessions, the Bank of Canada said Thursday.

Signalling the economy is now in the most dramatic part of the downturn, the central bank said gross domestic product likely shrank by 2.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year and would decline by one per cent in the second quarter of this year before returning to growth.

It said the growing output gap would not be eliminated until mid-2011, but this would be about a year or more faster than in the past, partly because inflation expectations are better anchored and the bank has therefore been able to cut interest rates to lower levels. REUTERS

Not as bad

- The Bank of Canada's projections of three quarters of recession this time contrasts with six quarters in 1981-82 and four quarters of contraction in the early 1990s.

Flat sales **Sony sounds warning**

TORU HANAI/REUTERS

A woman walks past a Sony Corp. flat-screen TV at the company's headquarters in Tokyo. Sony warned Thursday it would post a $2.9 billion US annual operating loss — its biggest loss ever — due to sliding demand, a stronger yen and costs to restructure its ailing electronics operations.

Vacation bookings good, but analysts warn of drop

VACATIONS The desire of Canadians to escape the cold and snow with a March Break getaway has so far trumped concerns about an economic recession — but cracks are beginning to form in the packaged holiday industry.

Flight Centre spokesperson Allison Wallace said this month will be a litmus test when it comes to gauging the outlook for 2009.

"January is traditionally our busiest month for inquiries and bookings and we're up on last year," she said.

Analysts, however, say it's a matter of time before Canadians put the brakes on unnecessary travel.

The threat of slumping demand comes at a particularly bad time for tour operators, which have collectively increased the seats they're selling in the North American market by more than 15 per cent this winter, according to analysts. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Retail data shows bite of recession

DECLINE Canadian retail sales dropped by 2.4 per cent in November from October, the steepest decline in nearly 11 years, and analysts said they expected worse to come as the recession starts to bite harder.

The November decline easily exceeded the 1.5 per cent fall expected by market analysts and was the largest since the 4.5 per cent plunge recorded in January 1998, when much of Eastern Canada was hit by an ice storm.

The value of sales at gasoline stations plummeted by 14.9 per cent from October, reflecting lower prices. Sales at new car dealers fell 3.4 per cent. Excluding the automotive sector, retail sales in November were flat. Overall retail sales in volume terms fell 0.6 per cent from October. REUTERS

Microsoft misses profit, cuts jobs

WARNING Microsoft Corp. stunned Wall Street with disappointing results that included plans to slash up to 5,000 jobs and a warning that revenue will almost certainly drop over the next two quarters.

Microsoft's elimination of 5,000 jobs — 1,400 on Thursday — amounts to about five per cent of its 96,000 work force.

Microsoft faces a shift by PC buyers to cheaper netbooks. The stripped-down laptops can run Windows, but Microsoft makes more on each sale of Windows for a PC than it does for a netbook. REUTERS

Business in brief

RIM PENALTY Canadian regulators are seeking a record penalty as high as $100 million from the top two executives of Research In Motion, Jim Balsillie and Mike Lazaridis, for their role in a stock-option accounting controversy dating back to 1996, the Globe and Mail newspaper reported.

OUTLOOK Apple Inc. shares rose more than seven per cent Thursday, a day after it announced stronger than expected financial results and solid outlook for the current quarter despite the weak economy. While it sold fewer iPhones than expected, iPod sales beat analyst estimates. But Apple shares are still off almost 55 per cent from the start of 2008. REUTERS

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First prize: Being a training camp tackling dummy

Former Dallas Cowboys receiver Michael Irvin, left, is launching a reality TV show in which 12 "football neophytes" will compete for a spot on the Dallas Cowboys' training camp roster. The Cowboys confirmed that one of their 80 roster spots will go to the show's winner. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports

Venus bounced Down Under

Venus Williams was knocked out of the Australian Open Thursday, stunned by Spanish player Carla Suarez Navarro in the second round. Suarez Navarro rallied from 5-2 down in the third and saved a match point before beating Williams 2-6, 6-3, 7-5. There was no upset of top seeds Daniel Nestor of Toronto and Nenad Zimonjic of Serbia in their first-round doubles match. METRO NEWS SERVICES

JOHN.CHICK@METRONEWS.CA

Crosby out of all-star game

NHL Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby has withdrawn from Sunday's NHL all-star game because of injury, and Tampa Bay's Martin St. Louis will take his spot on the Eastern Conference roster.

Crosby has been battling a knee injury, which forced him to miss last Friday's game against Anaheim. Crosby, who was voted a starter for this year's contest, did not play in last year's event because of a high ankle sprain.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports in brief

NBA According to a report in the New York Daily News, a deal that would send the Raptors' Jermaine O'Neal to Miami for Shawn Marion has progressed to the point where the teams have exchanged medical records on the players, usually a precursor to an imminent trade.

NBA Alonzo Mourning has decided to retire rather than mount another NBA comeback at age 38. The seven-time all-star centre said Thursday he won't return from a devastating leg injury Dec. 19, 2007 – the fourth anniversary of his lifesaving kidney transplant.

Alonzo Mourning

SKIING Swiss skier Daniel Albrecht sustained brain and lung injuries and was placed in an induced coma Thursday after crashing during downhill training in Austria.

NHL The Philadelphia Flyers announced Thursday that centre Danny Briere will miss at least a month of action after undergoing an exploratory surgical procedure on his groin/stomach area.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

King Handles takes them to school

From the And1 tour to university, Vancouver baller finds niche on East Coast

MATTHEW WUEST
Metro Canada

If you go to the Saint Mary's University gym in Halifax looking for Joey (King Handles) Haywood, Ross Quackenbush will have a pretty good idea of where you might find his star point guard.

"Where's Joey? Joey's studying. He's studying … all the time," the Saint Mary's Huskies men's basketball coach says. "He's made the academic commitment whole hog."

For all the unthinkable things Haywood has done on the court this season while leading Atlantic University Sport in scoring as a first-year athlete, it's what he's done off the court that is perhaps his most satisfying achievement.

The 6-1 Vancouver native has maintained a 3.0 grade-point average as an arts student, focusing on psychology courses in pursuit of a career as a social worker.

That success is something he never dreamed of growing up in Vancouver. He was told in elementary school he had a learning disability and was placed in special classes.

"I was always in special classes … I never had confidence in myself," he says.

"This is giving me an opportunity to see if I still have a learning disability, or, do I even have a learning disability? I don't think I do, when I scored a 3.0."

The 24-year-old says he's one of the only people in his family who has gone to university.

He finished high school in 2002 and spent six years travelling the world on the streetball circuit.

Academics were never much of a consideration.

"I just always played basketball," he says.

When Quackenbush recruited him last May after stumbling upon him in a pickup game, it changed his life.

"I hadn't opened up a book since 2002," Haywood admits.

"People say university is hard, but you put your mind to it and you can do whatever you want. It just takes determination."

Haywood made a name for himself as a streetballer on the And1 Mixtape Tour, nicknamed King Handles for his magical ball-handling. But some wondered how Haywood would adjust to a more structured university offence.

Nine games into his university career and he is No. 1 in the AUS conference with a 20.6 points-per-game average. He also averages 6.4 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 2.2 steals.

Haywood is an entertaining player because of his skill level, but Quackenbush says the key to his success — on and off the court — is that he's "always working so darn hard."

"It's no surprise," Quackenbush says. "If you put the time in, you get the results. He's one of the best players this conference has produced. And there have been a lot."

NICK PEARCE/SMU ATHLETICS

Vancouver's Joey Haywood has seamlessly made the transition from the streetball circuit to a structured university offence.

Koskie wants to make comeback with Team Canada

YorkReport

Marty York

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While several Canadians are either not able or not interested in playing for their country's team at the World Baseball Classic in March, there's one who's quietly been busting his guts for the chance to participate.

In fact, after more than two seasons of inactivity because of post-concussion syndrome, Manitoban Corey Koskie is desperately trying to crack Team Canada's roster for what very likely would be his last hurrah. Metro has learned the ex-Blue Jays third baseman has an agreement in writing with general manager Greg Hamilton that stipulates he'd be added to Team Canada's 45-man, preliminary roster if he is deemed physically fit by Feb. 1.

"My wife and I have talked lots about this," Koskie confirmed in an interview, "and we've agreed that (playing for Canada) would be a great way to retire."

Koskie, 35, said he has been working out diligently for months and has received permission from the Minnesota Twins to train at their camp in Fort Myers, Fla., in February if he gets the green light from Team Canada.

Koskie starred for the Twins from 1998 through 2004. He was the Jays' marquee free-agent acquisition for 2005, but struggled with injuries and was dealt to Milwaukee after the season. Concussions sidelined him while with the Brewers in 2006 and he had to sit out 2007 and 2008.

Should Koskie crack Team Canada's final 28-man roster, he's unlikely to see much playing time. Manager Ernie Whitt plans to start the Kansas City Royals' Mark Teahen at third base, the Houston Astros' Chris Barnwell at shortstop, the Washington Nationals' Peter Orr at second and Minnesota's Justin Morneau at first.

Koskie last played in 2006.

To find out how a columnist unwittingly saved Nick Kypreos' job, check out Marty York's NHL Report at metronews.ca/nhlreport.

• Doug Berry, who coached the Blue Bombers to the Grey Cup game in 2007 and was fired by Winnipeg after the 2008 season, is desperately seeking work after the Toronto Argonauts rejected his applications to become their head or assistant coach … Look for the Argos to acquire quarterback Kevin Glenn, at least as a backup to Kerry Joseph, now that new Winnipeg coach Mike Kelly intends to trade the veteran … Despite efforts by Argos co-owner David Cynamon to downplay it, Michael (Pinball) Clemons is indeed out as the club's chief shot-caller — as reported here Tuesday — and will take a significant pay cut to stay on in an ambassador role … The Hamilton Tiger-Cats, meanwhile, have told QB Casey Printers he's not welcome back unless he accepts a pay cut that would reduce his $450,000-a-year salary to less than $200,000.

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Oldest living big leaguer passes away

Bill Werber, the the oldest living ex-Major League Baseball player, died Thursday at 100. Werber played with Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx and Lefty Grove in stints with the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Two girls and one common dream

On opposite ends of the earth, two 16-year olds are ready to make some noise in the sports world

MARTY YORK
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They live in different worlds, speak different languages and play different sports.

Yet it's uncanny that Japan's Eri Yoshida and Canada's Brigette Lacquette have so much in common.

Both are 16, both are dominating male opponents and both are attracting excessive attention because of their abilities and potential.

Yoshida is blowing away batters with a remarkable sidearm knuckleball that recently landed her a professional contract in an all-male Japanese baseball league. She's being viewed in Japan as a pioneer and a symbol of the changing status of women in her country.

REUTERS

Eri Yoshida signed a professional contract with a Japanese baseball team.

Lacquette is astonishing scouts by thoroughly outplaying male opponents in the Western Manitoba AA Midget Hockey League. She is her league's top talent. She was the youngest player at the recent World Under-18 women's hockey championship in Germany and was named best defenceman.

"Several scouts have told me that, if Brigette continues in the direction she's going, she'll be the greatest female hockey player in Canadian history," said Scott Taylor, sports editor of Grass Roots News, Manitoba's Aboriginal newspaper. "She's one of the few players I've seen who can do everything all game with her head up. She's so fast that she flies by opponents. And she's a great playmaker."

Brigette lives in Mallard, Man. "We're nowhere," said her father, Terrence, a Metis who has lived in Mallard his entire life. "Our community has about 80 adults, 40 kids, 20 dogs and 15 cats."

Brigette Lacquette, centre, was named top blueliner at the under-18 women's hockey championship.

Still, dozens of universities — including Cornell, Providence, Minnesota and North Dakota – have found her and are bombarding her with expressions of interest.

Brigette, though, is only 5-foot-5 and so, barring a serious growth spurt, don't expect her to break the NHL's sex barrier.

Yoshida, though, has a serious chance to advance to MLB. She's only five feet but knuckleballers don't need size or strength. They need only to fool batters. Yoshida recently left a line of nine veteran male batters hitless and baseball types think she could seriously perfect her pitch to major-league calibre.

"She can pitch," said Yoshihiro Nakada, her manager in the Kansai Independent League.

"The media attention we get from her is most welcome, but that's not why she is on our team. She's with us because she's an excellent pitcher."

Yoshida started pitching in Grade 2, after her father showed her a video of Boston Red Sox knuckleballer Tim Wakefield.

"I'm honoured that she patterned herself after me," Wakefield was quoted as saying recently. "I've heard great things about her. Apparently, she's amazing. I wish her the best of luck. Maybe I can learn something from her eventually. Nothing surprises me any more, so I wouldn't be surprised if she follows in the footsteps of other Japanese pitchers and winds up in the big leagues some day."

"The world is progressing," said Machiko Osawa, a professor at Japan Women's University. "The United States has an African-American president and Eri Yoshida has been accepted in the conservative world of sports.

"These are historical times."

Does the NHL's future lie across the Atlantic in Europe?

If you go back to 1957, a hockey fan might have called it preposterous, the notion of having an NHL team in southern California.

Ten years later, the Los Angeles Kings were born.

In 10 years from now, where will the NHL be?

To some, the answer is clear: Europe. Perhaps a European division — Berlin, London, Prague, Stockholm, Helsinki, Zurich. It's not a far-fetched idea.

"There is a great deal of enthusiasm and a real market for the NHL game in Europe," says Paul Kelly, executive director of the NHL Players Association and one of the leading proponents of the globalization of the game.

For now, the league talks only of doing what's best for the 30 existing teams.

The Phoenix Coyotes are living off league handouts, the Florida Panthers have laid off staff, the Nashville Predators have one of its owners in bankruptcy court, the Atlanta Thrashers owners are suing each other, and the situation in Tampa changes minute-by-minute.

Relocating weak teams — perhaps putting a second team in Toronto, or one in Hamilton or Winnipeg — within North America is certainly more likely in the short term than locating a team in Europe, said Kelly.

Detlev Zwick, a professor of marketing in the Schulich School of Business at York University in Toronto, sees Europe as the NHL's best hope, believing the North American sports market to be saturated, witnessing an economy in recession.

"They have to look at Europe, and yes, there are lots of logistical problems that come into play," says Zwick. "But it's sort of inevitable from a corporate perspective. They need to develop new markets if they want to see real growth."

GETTY IMAGES

Lack of interest in many American cities, combined with the current economic climate, may lead the league to expand across the Atlantic. But would Europe accept the NHL?

The NHL also has its reputation at stake as the world's top hockey league. It faces a direct threat from the KHL, the former Russian Super League that has pan-European aspirations. "The NHL may not have a choice if they are to maintain their premier position as the best hockey in the world," said Zwick.

Caught in the middle are European ice hockey federations, desperate to keep their national leagues intact, fearful that the biggest cities in those leagues would be poached by outside interests.

"We don't see any reason for the NHL to play permanently in Europe," said Jukka-Pekka Vuorinen, president of Hockey Europe.

The International Ice Hockey Federation says the NHL would fail miserably, citing the fact that the NFL pulled the plug on the money-losing NFL Europe and saying the NHL would be seen as interlopers along the line of how the WHA was perceived when playing in NHL cities.

"It would be a potential disaster for this NHL's European division," said Rene Fasel, president the IIHF.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Did you know?
There are 2,534,665 people in Canada who were born in a Year of the Ox as of Census Day in 2006 (based on 2006 census population figures). **STATISTICS CANADA**

Chinese New Year 牛

SPECIAL FEATURES EDITOR: STEPHANIE BOMBA, STEPHANIE.BOMBA@METRONEWS.CA

CHINA PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

Dinner with family is one of the most important events to ring in the Chinese New Year.

Family focus of holiday

Chinese New Year a time to celebrate good luck, prosperity

JOSEPHINE LIM
for Metro Canada

The winter holidays may be over, but the celebrations have just begun for those who celebrate Chinese New Year.

This year, the start of the 15-day celebration begins on Monday. The date for this is determined by the lunisolar calendar, which refers to the moon phase and time of the solar year.

It's a holiday that's very family oriented, and every year workers in China will make huge migrations to be home in time for New Year's Eve.

"Usually, New Year's Eve is the time the family will get together for sure," says Chai Thompson, the president of the Mulan Chinese Culture Centre in Halifax. "The older generation will give the younger generation red envelopes, which will have some money inside instead of gifts."

These envelopes are also called lucky money, and Thompson says these envelopes aren't given to just immediate family — aunts and uncles will hand them out as well.

The envelopes are decorated in red and gold, the two colours for the holiday. Red represents good luck and prosperity, while gold means good fortune and power.

On this day, the house is cleaned in preparation for guests and a big feast is prepared in celebration.

One popular food to eat during this time is dumplings.

"The whole family gets together to make that," says Thompson. "In Northern China, they eat that on New Year's Eve."

On New Year's Day, families will go around to different households to visit their relatives and wish them a happy new year. Red envelopes are also exchanged during this time.

> **"New Year's Eve is the time the family will get together."**
> Chai Thompson

The holiday itself has evolved over the years and habits like giving cards has become a norm.

"In olden China, we had cards, but it wasn't so popular," says Thompson. "But now, everybody is sending cards."

Wal-Mart Canada has gone a step further, and since last year, the compnay has introduced Chinese ornaments, posters, paper cut-outs, lanterns and even plush toys for the holiday.

The top sellers of those were the lanterns, says Karin Campbell, the manager of corporate affairs for Wal-Mart Canada.

This year, they've also expanded the number of stores that carry these from 20 to 36, says Campbell.

From her customer information, she also says that they've found many non-Asian families have been purchasing these items as well.

As for other cultures celebrating Chinese New Year too, some people don't seem to mind.

"We're happy to share everything with a different culture just to let people know the Chinese culture," says Kevin Fan, the office manager at the Winnipeg Chinese Cultural Centre.

Year of the Ox plush toy, $3.88, and Year of the Ox gift card, far left. Both are available at Wal-Mart.

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Trading partner

China is Canada's second largest trading partner, after the United States. In 2007, the value of imports to Canada from China was $38.3 billion. High-tech products such as computers and telecommunication and related equipment dominated imports from China. Games and toys, apparel and footwear, and furniture and fixtures also contributed. **STATISTICS CANADA**

Chinese New Year

Ox dishes inspire Chinese menus

RICK MCGINNIS
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Chinese New Year's dinner is about a lot of things — it's a celebration of family, of the year to come and an invocation of luck, and every one of these things is hinted at in a meal richly steeped in symbols.

Denise Yan, event manager of Toronto's Chinese Cultural Centre, tells me that the Chinese New Year dinner was once nearly the only regular occasion that would bring a family together, though in the age of e-mails, text messages and webcams, the sense of occasion has been diminished somewhat.

Still, young Chinese-Canadians looking for ways to maintain their identity are often "more Chinese than the Chinese in Hong Kong," and traditions like the New Year banquet remain popular, though deep-fried dishes, massive portions and rich sauces have been falling out of favour.

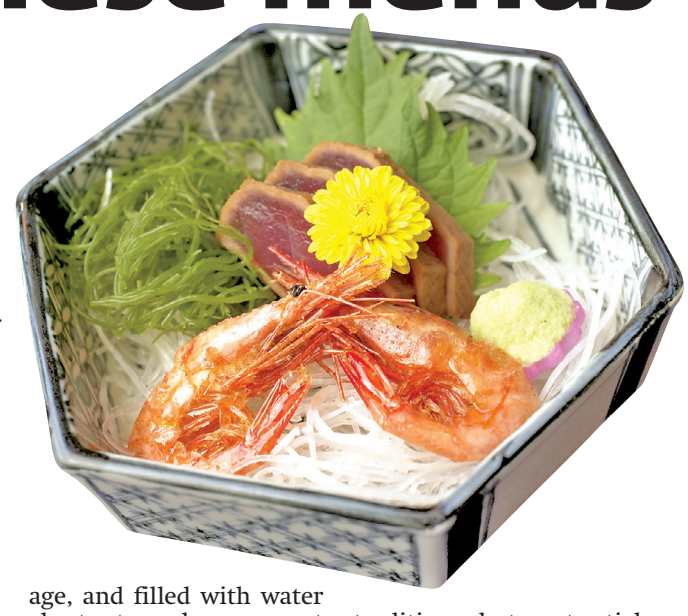
Ken Tam, executive chef at Lai Wah Heen, the five star Chinese dining room at Toronto's Metropolitan Hotel, insists that the symbolic element remains paramount, no matter what innovations a chef might bring to traditional cuisine.

"Essential dishes for a Chinese New Year menu include chicken, fish, dried oyster and dried seaweed," Tam says. "This is because the dishes symbolize important Chinese meanings. For example, chicken and fish equals good fortune, dried oyster means good event, dried seaweed is associated with wealth and shrimp with laughter."

The New Year is the year of the ox, and Tam is acknowledging this with a special dessert — ox-shaped pastries. Meanwhile, in Vancouver, chef Stuart Irving of Gastown's popular Wild Rice restaurant is preparing a special three-course meal with the ox at its head. The first course is a steamed oxtail half-moon dumpling with a ceviche made of local B.C. shrimp, and the main course is a braised Pemberton beef shank, deboned and stuffed with Asian herbs and served with Five Treasure Rice — a twist on the traditional lotus leaf-wrapped package, and filled with water chestnut, cashews, sweet Chinese sausage, pea shoots and shallots.

"A lot of our customers are young — they're Canadian-Chinese. They like to see the mixture. We do a good play on dumplings. We like to put some western ingredients in there." Chef Stuart Irving

This Chinese New Year marks the Year of the Ox, left, but many dishes are steeped in symbolism for the new year — shrimp, above, for example, is associated with laughter.



Dessert is another dumpling, deep fried and filled with red bean paste and white chocolate, and served with star anise caramel tofu ice cream.

"The five treasure rice I've chosen to promote good luck," Irving says. "The dumplings are very traditional as well — I've chosen dumplings for the first and last course, and I've tried to keep within tradition, but not stick with it too much. We want to keep it there, but we're not strict — we want to play it loosely."

"A lot of our customers are young — they're Canadian-Chinese. They like to see the mixture. We do a good play on dumplings. We like to put some western ingredients in there. A lot of our customers love it — it's something different. The old traditional flavours are there, but it's a bit of a twist."

Braised Abalone in Oyster Sauce

"It is important to present extremely high quality seafoods, such as Abalone," says Ken Tam of Lai Wah Heen, "to recognize and celebrate the year that has gone by." To that end, he has provided this luxurious entrée with abalone at its centre.

Ingredients:
- 10 pieces dried abalone (16 heads per catty)
- 1 kg baby bok choy
- 450 g lean spare pork ribs
- 450 g Yunnan ham hock
- 250 g chicken breast
- 4 pairs chicken feet
- 4 slices ginger
- 2 pieces scallion
- 1 piece dried tangerine peel
- 1 tbsp crystal rock sugar
- 100 g dried scallops
- 500 mL light chicken
- 2 tbsp cooking oil

Seasoning A:
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp chicken base powder
- 1 tsp dark soy sauce
- 1 tbsp Chinese Shao Hsing wine
- 1 piece dried tangerine peel

Seasoning B:
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp chicken base powder
- 1 tsp dark soy sauce
- 1 tbsp Chinese Shao Hsing wine
- 2 tbsp oyster sauce
- 2 tbsp liquid from cooked abalone
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- dash of white pepper

Thickening:
- 1 tbsp corn flour
- 1 tbsp water

Equipment:
- Pot
- Wok
- Saucepan

Preparation & cooking:
1. Soak the dried abalone in cold water for 6 hours.
2. Drain and cover them with boiling water. Simmer them for approximately 4 hours, then drain water.
3. Once dried, scrub the abalone with a soft brush to clean thoroughly.
4. Place the abalone back inside the cooking pot, cover them with more boiling water and add pork, ginger, scallion, chicken, dried scallops and "Seasoning A."
5. Cover the pot and bring back to a boil.
6. Reduce the heat and simmer for approximately 6 hours until abalone is tender, adding more water as needed to keep the abalone just immersed.
7. Remove the abalone from the pot and drain thoroughly.
8. Trim off the uneven edges.
9. Discard the pork, ginger, chicken, scallion and tangerine peel.
10. Trim the baby bok choy and bring it to a boil, discarding the leaves and keeping only about 5-6 cm of the stems.
11. Heat the wok, add cooking oil and chicken broth and bring to a boil.
12. Simmer for 1 minute. Drain and arrange around the rim of a serving plate. Keep warm.
13. Add the abalone to the saucepan with the "Seasoning B" ingredients and bring to a boil.
14. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes.
15. Add the thickening mix and stir until the sauce thickens and becomes clear.
16. Arrange the abalone on the serving plate and pour the sauce on top.

– KEN TAM RECIPE

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By the numbers

Roughly eight per cent of Canada's population falls under each of the 12 signs of the Chinese zodiac. It is estimated that 8.3 per cent of the population of Kelowna was born under the sign of the ox, the highest proportion in the country among census metropolitan areas. Québec and Montréal are lowest at 7.9 per cent. **STATISTICS CANADA**

Shoppers show signs of restraint

Retail sales expected to slow despite holiday

GUANG NIU/GETTY IMAGES

PAUL ZHANG/REUTERS

Vendors are expecting retail sales growth to slow in Asia, despite the Chinese New Year holiday.

Shopping is a national obsession in Singapore, yet this Lunar New Year, retailers are struggling to get the city's usually insatiable shoppers to part with their cash as a cloud of economic gloom hangs over Asia.

"Even though there's a 50 per cent sale on here, look at the sales counter. There's no one queuing. That's not normal," said Mrs. Them, a 47-year-old housewife, browsing through a department store at the city's renowned Orchard Road shopping district.

The Lunar New Year, which starts on Jan. 26, comes hard on the heels of Christmas, signalling a traditional two-month shopping frenzy in most of East Asia as consumers splash out on seasonal foods as well as gifts and new clothes for the holidays.

This year, though, shoppers are showing signs of restraint as a global economic crisis knocks consumer confidence across Asia and prompts governments and retailers to conjure up new ways to bolster spending.

"It's going to be tough for Asian retailers, perhaps not quite as tough as in Europe and the U.S., but we will see slower growth," said Paul McKenzie, head of consumer research at CLSA in Hong Kong.

He expects retail sales growth in Hong Kong and Singapore to be negative this year, or flat at best, compared with a rise of about 11.5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively in 2008.

Slower growth in tourism, which accounts for 20-30 per cent of retail sales in Hong Kong, is expected to hurt retailers there.

In China, HSBC forecasts annual retail sales growth to slow to a nominal rate of 15 per cent this year from about 18 per cent in 2008 as consumers tighten their belts amid a slowdown.

"Everyone is worried about what will happen after Chinese New Year."
Terry O'Connor

To stimulate its economy, China will give its neediest citizens hand-outs of up to 180 yuan ($26 US), while Taiwan will dole out the equivalent of $109 in shopping vouchers to brighten the mood before the Chinese new year holiday.

Retailers globally have been hurt by a deteriorating economic outlook. In the United States, stores experienced their most dismal Christmas holiday sales in 40 years, while a growing list of household names have disappeared off Britain's high street.

Yet analysts say Asian retailers have an advantage as the impact of the economic crisis is far less than in the United States and Europe.

Also, consumer spending will likely benefit from sizeable government fiscal packages of about $640 billion in Asia, excluding Japan, hefty interest rate cuts and lower fuel prices.

Still, with Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore all in recession, and Korea's economy tipped to contract in 2009 for the first time in 11 years, this year's shopping season could prove critical.

"Everyone is worried about what will happen after Chinese New Year, when the impetus of the Christmas and new year shopping period is over," says Terry O'Connor, Regional CEO for Courts, an electronic and furniture retailer that has 80 stores in Southeast Asia. "Consumers are cautious but it's not a disaster in Asia."

Asia has enjoyed surging growth in recent years, which has expanded the ranks of a middle-class keen to acquire the trappings of their newfound affluence.

But in a region heavily dependent on exports, which fell sharply in December, cuts in work orders are leading to lay-offs in factories across the region.

The International Monetary Fund predicts Asia's economy will grow 4.9 per cent this year compared to a forecast of 6 per cent in 2008.

The mood in Japan is particularly glum as it enters what some economists say might be its longest recession on record.

Japan's no. 3 department store chain Takashimaya Co. Ltd. said sales at its flagship store in Tokyo fell 5 per cent year-on-year in the first two trading days of 2009, a period that traditionally marks an annual ritual of bargain hunting.

Discretionary items such as designer clothes and electronics are being hit hard, while stores report relatively solid sales of food items as people choose to spend more time at home.

"Our immediate goal is just to survive," said Ichiro Fukuyama, associate director at J. Front Retailing, the country's second largest department store chain.

Consumer expenditure across Asia is expected to slow in 2009 and consumer confidence has been hurt. In China, 46 per cent of consumers thought the country's economic situation was good in November compared to 90 per cent in April 2007. Service sector sentiment in Japan, watched closely for consumer and retail trends, hit a record low in December. **REUTERS**

More rice, please!
About 5.2 kg of rice was available for consumption per person in Canada in 2007. Not only was this nearly double the amount in 1986, this was a record! **STATISTICS CANADA**

Chinese New Year

OX
Born in 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009
This will be a sociable year for you, and you'll generally bring good cheer wherever you go. However, you'll also be susceptible to unstable periods when you may abandon projects because of your impatience — be disciplined. The second quarter of the year will prove difficult for matters of the heart — but the problems and jealousies should quickly clear.

TIGER
Born in 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998
This will be a lucky, creative year if you judge wisely and are discreet about your plans. The year may start with quarrels between couples, but these will give way to a period of tenderness. Beware of romantic delusions.

RABBIT
Born in 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999
This year you'll focus on projects close to your heart, which will try your patience. Go easy on yourself and keep at it — you'll be rewarded. There'll be adventure in romance. Don't take decisions in anger.

DRAGON
Born in 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000
A very positive year is in store for you. Don't be overly idealistic — protect yourself from disappointments caused by other people's actions. The third quarter is particularly blessed for romance, and a good time for wedding plans.

SNAKE
Born in 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001
You'll become more extroverted this year, and should indulge your creativity. Don't be too compassionate — take care of yourself first. In the second quarter you may fall prey to impossible love — avoid an affair with someone who isn't free.

HORSE
Born in 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002
Your life at home, with your partner, in the office and in your social circles looks set to blossom this year. Always act as you would expect others to act, and you will have much to look forward to.

GOAT
Born in 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003
You'll start the year full of energy. Luck will be with you, but you'll still have to work hard to realize your ambitions. Those in a relationship should initially keep a close eye on their mates, then fend against temptations themselves.

MONKEY
Born in 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004
This year, you'll have the willpower to carry out your good resolutions in different areas of your life. You'll be bursting with vitality for most of the year, and fortune will smile on you. The beginning of the year will be a calm period for couples.

ROOSTER
Born in 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005
You'll have good fortune this year as well as chances to prove yourself. Be brave, meticulous and rational, and success should come your way.

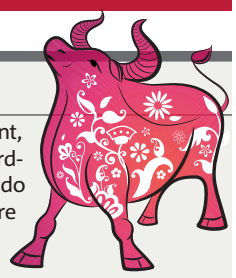
DOG
Born in 1910, 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006
This will be a year of positive change, both unexpected and worked for. If you do need advice, don't hesitate to consult professionals.

PIG
Born in 1911, 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007
Your qualities are courage and enthusiasm and you'll be able to use these to good effect this year. You can look forward to a spell of content. You'll feel pretty sexy for most of the year — just don't let yourself be too naïve or you may be disappointed.

RAT
Born in 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008
This year has potential for great happiness if you behave reasonably. You'll feel energetic, and might take up a new activity, which will further boost your confidence. You've a strong chance for romance; you'll feel super sensual in the first quarter of the year.

– HONG KONG TOURISM BOARD

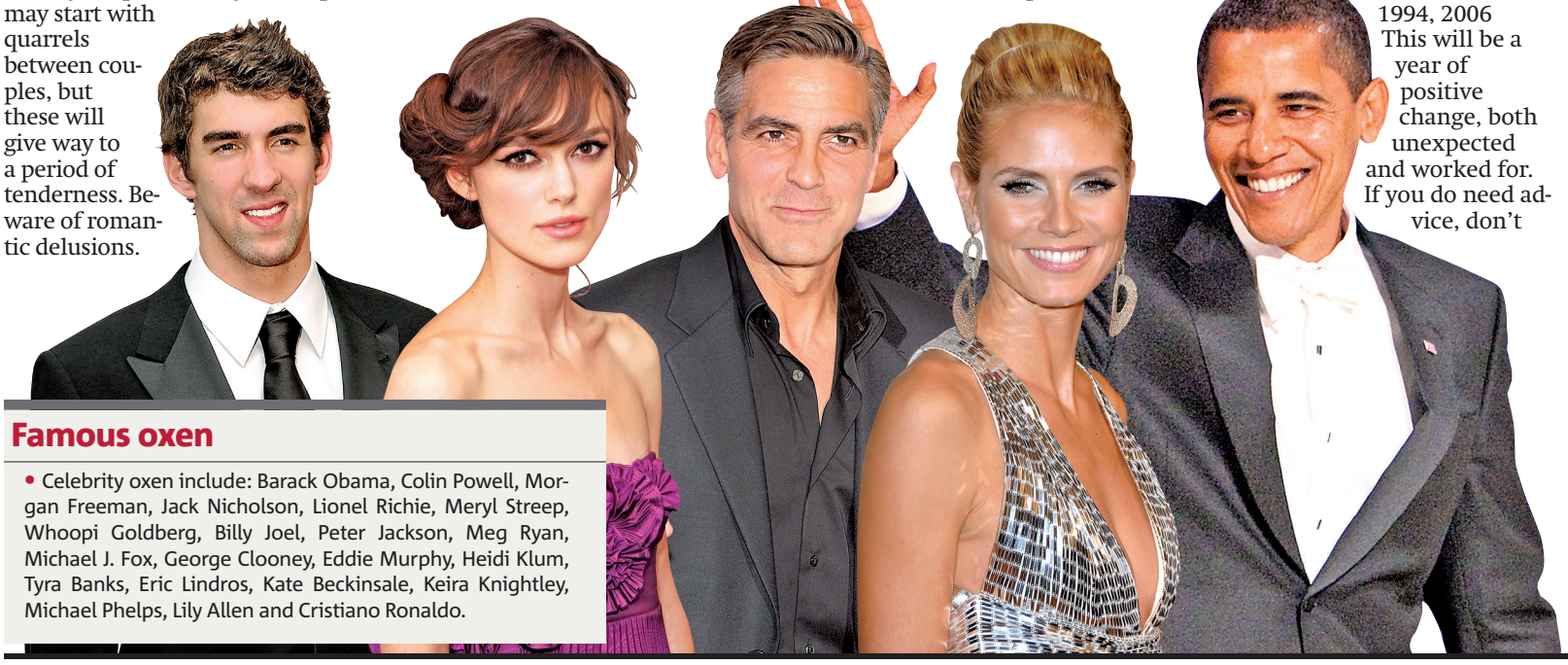
It's the Year of the Ox!



- People born in this year are patient, hard-working and able to handle hardship. They are quiet, but when they do speak, they are very eloquent. They are truthful and sincere when it comes to business dealings. They are logical and systematic in their tasks, but have fierce tempers and can be very stubborn. Those born in the Year of the Ox are compatible with those born in the year of the snake, rooster, rat or dog.

Famous oxen

- Celebrity oxen include: Barack Obama, Colin Powell, Morgan Freeman, Jack Nicholson, Lionel Richie, Meryl Streep, Whoopi Goldberg, Billy Joel, Peter Jackson, Meg Ryan, Michael J. Fox, George Clooney, Eddie Murphy, Heidi Klum, Tyra Banks, Eric Lindros, Kate Beckinsale, Keira Knightley, Michael Phelps, Lily Allen and Cristiano Ronaldo.



From left: Michael Phelps, Keira Knightley, George Clooney, Heidi Klum and U.S. President Barack Obama.

GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

events

CHINESE ORCHESTRA by B.C. Chinese Music Association. Listen to traditional Chinese music while enjoying the cultural experiences. At the Aberdeen Centre, Central Atrium, on Jan. 31, from 2 p.m.-3 p.m. Info at aberdeencentre.com/en/activities.php

CHINESE DANCE SPECTACULAR by Strathcona Chinese Dance Company. The Chinese Dance Company presents classical Chinese dance and music in a magnificent and colourful presentation. Free. At the Aberdeen Centre, Central Atrium, on Jan. 31, from 3:15 p.m.-4:15 p.m. Info at aberdeencentre.com/en/activities.php

2009 LUNARFEST: LANTERN-A-MANIA Features a sea of glowing lanterns to represent the Chinese culture. Lantern designs will represent the 2010 Olympics and the host nation, Canada. Free. At the Vancouver Art Gallery Plaza on Feb. 1, from 3 p.m.-8 p.m. Info at lunarfest.org.

NEW YEAR PARADE It's the Year of the Ox! Celebrate the Chinese New Year with family and friends and experience the unique culture. Free. At Chinatown — Will commence at Millennium Gate (on Pender Street) on Feb. 1, noon-2 p.m. Info at henderson-development.ca/theinternationalvillage/home.php

CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL IN THE GARDEN Journey back in time to 15th-century China and enjoy a look into another world. At the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, Keefer Street, on Feb. 1, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Cost: by donation. Info at vancouverchinesegarden.com.

– TARYN MCELHERAN/ FOR METRO VANCOUVER

Visit metronews.ca/movies to get showtimes, watch trailers and read reviews.

Movies&Entertainment

EDITOR: DEAN LISK, DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Movies

Button tops Oscar noms Pg 22

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button was the big leader at the announcement of this year's Academy Awards, receiving 13 nominations — including best picture, best actor and best adapted screenplay.

movies Pg 24

Inkheart's screen adaptation pales in comparison to novel

music Pg 27

New Pornographers frontman goes solo

7th heaven Pg 28

See why this revamped hybrid is making it into our hot list

Also opening this week

Underworld: Rise of The Lycans opens in theatres this Friday. As there were no press previews, there will be a review of the film in Monday's edition of Metro.

Movies

⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕ A CLASSIC; ⊕⊕⊕⊕ EXCELLENT; ⊕⊕⊕ GOOD; ⊕⊕ FAIR; ⊕ POOR

Talking Oscars

What the stars are saying about their Academy nominations:

Brad Pitt

"This is a great honor for the movie, and I'm especially happy for David Fincher, for without him there would be no Ben Button."

— BRAD PITT, BEST ACTOR, THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON
PARAMOUNT STATEMENT

"My wife (Diane Lane) called me. It's her birthday and she said, 'It's the best present I could have gotten.' She sung me a happy nomination birthday song."

— JOSH BROLIN, BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR, MILK
PEOPLE.COM

Angelina Jolie

"Working with Clint Eastwood was a reward in itself that will last me a lifetime. It has been an exceptional year for acting, and I am honoured to be in the company of these talented actors whose performances all deserve this recognition."

— ANGELINA JOLIE, BEST ACTRESS
USWEEKLY.COM

"It is such a thrill to be recognized in this category with these remarkably talented women. I was with my parents and my dog when I got the news and we were all overjoyed — although I'm not sure my dog knew what was going on. This is a great day to be an actress!"

— ANNE HATHAWAY, BEST ACTRESS, RACHEL GETTING MARRIED
PEOPLE.COM

Kate Winslet

"I'm extremely happy to have been nominated. And very fortunate. Playing Hanna Schmitz will always remain one of the biggest challenges I've ever been blessed with."

— KATE WINSLET, BEST ACTRESS, THE READER
PEOPLE.COM

(Clockwise from left) Slumdog Millionaire received 10 nominations, including best picture; Gus van Sant's Milk picked up some major nominations, including best actor for Sean Penn. Anne Hathaway got a best actress nod for Rachel Getting Married; Mickey Rourke was nominated for The Wrestler; and Waltz With Bashir picked up a nomination for best foreign film.

The race begins

Button, Slumdog lead Oscar nominations

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, a drama in which Brad Pitt plays a man who ages backward, led the field of Oscar contenders with 13 nominations, organizers said Thursday.

Slumdog Millionaire, the tale of an impoverished orphan's improbable victory on an Indian television game show, followed with 10, while the Batman sequel The Dark Knight and the gay-rights saga Milk each landed eight.

Benjamin Button, Slumdog Millionaire and Milk will vie for best picture at the 81st annual Academy Awards, alongside The Reader and Frost/Nixon. All five also had best director nominations.

Clint Eastwood's recent box office champ Gran Torino was notably snubbed, with no nominations.

As expected, late Australian actor Heath Ledger was nominated for his supporting role as the villainous Joker in The Dark Knight.

The Dark Knight, the biggest box office smash since Titanic in 1997, had been seen as having an outside shot at a best picture slot but all of its other nominations ended up being in technical categories.

With 13 nominations, Benjamin Button falls one short of the record shared by All About Eve (1959) and Titanic. Its nominations included best actor for Pitt, best director for David Fincher, best supporting actress for Taraji P. Henson and best adapted screenplay for Eric Roth and Robin Swicord.

Loosely based on a short story by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Benjamin Button has been a commercial and critical success, and will likely combine with The Dark Knight to boost the Oscar's ratings.

The 81st Annual Academy Awards

In recent years, Academy voters have favored smaller, arthouse pictures and TV viewers stayed away in droves.

"It is a good across-the-board look at movies of the past year," said Sid Ganis, president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. "I like the list because it is somewhat not as predicted. It goes from little old Slumdog to big Benjamin Button."

Meryl Streep, 59, already the all-time acting Oscar record holder with 14 nominations, landed her 15th for her lead role in Doubt, in which she plays a vindictive nun.

Other leading films included the animated feature WALL-E with six nominations and Doubt, Frost/Nixon and The Reader with five each.

- The Oscars will be presented Feb. 22 at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood. Australian actor Hugh Jackman will host. REUTERS

Ledger's Joker strikes again

NOMINATION Heath Ledger's action movie villain The Joker is getting the last laugh over Hollywood. The Australian actor's best supporting actor Oscar nomination Thursday came exactly a year after he died of an accidental prescription-drug overdose and was a rare exception to the rule that Oscar voters overlook action hero movies.

Not only did Ledger help the Batman sequel The Dark Knight become the biggest movie since Titanic, but he also picked up a slew of awards for his chilling but compelling role as The Joker.

Thursday's Oscar nomination put Ledger in line for only the second posthumous Academy Award to be handed out to an actor. Peter Finch won for 1976's Network about two months after he suffered a fatal heart attack, aged 60.

"Oscar voters are notorious snobs who turn up their noses at superhero movies. This may be popcorn, but it is gourmet popcorn," said Tom O'Neil, a movie columnist. REUTERS

List of nominees

Best Picture

- The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Frost/Nixon; Milk; The Reader; Slumdog Millionaire.

Best Actor

- Richard Jenkins - The Visitor; Frank Langella - Frost/Nixon; Sean Penn - Milk; Brad Pitt - The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Mickey Rourke - The Wrestler.

Best Actress

- Anne Hathaway - Rachel Getting Married; Angelina Jolie - Changeling; Melissa Leo - Frozen River; Meryl Streep - Doubt; Kate Winslet - The Reader.

Best Supporting Actor

- Josh Brolin - Milk; Robert Downey Jr. - Tropic Thunder; Philip Seymour Hoffman - Doubt; Heath Ledger - The Dark Knight; Michael Shannon - Revolutionary Road

Best Supporting Actress

- Amy Adams - Doubt; Penelope Cruz - Vicky Cristina Barcelona; Viola Davis - Doubt; Taraji P. Henson - The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Marisa Tomei - The Wrestler.

Best Director

- David Fincher - The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; Ron Howard - Frost/Nixon; Gus Van Sant - Milk; Stephen Daldry - The Reader; Danny Boyle - Slumdog Millionaire

Best Animated Feature

- Bolt; Kung-Fu Panda; WALL-E.

Best Foreign Language Film

- The Baader Meinhof Complex - Germany; The Class - France; Departures - Japan; Revanche - Austria; Waltz with Bashir - Israel

Best Foreign Language Film

- The Baader Meinhof Complex - Germany; The Class - France; Departures - Japan; Revanche - Austria; Waltz with Bashir - Israel

Best Adapted Screenplay

- Eric Roth and Robin Swicord, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button; John Patrick Shanley, Doubt; Peter Morgan, Frost/Nixon; David Hare, The Reader; Simon Beaufoy, Slumdog Millionaire.

Best Original Screenplay

- Courtney Hunt, Frozen River; Mike Leigh, Happy-Go-Lucky; Martin McDonagh, In Bruges; Dustin Lance Black, Milk; Andrew Stanton, Jim Reardon and Pete Docter, "WALL-E."

Original Score

- The Curious Case of Benjamin Button, Alexandre Desplat; Defiance, James Newton Howard; Milk, Danny Elfman; Slumdog Millionaire, A.R. Rahman; WALL-E, Thomas Newman.
- More nominees at metronews.ca

Correction
The Uninvited opens in theatres across Canada on Jan. 30, not this Friday. An incorrect date appeared in Wednesday's issue of Metro.

Movies

A CLASSIC; EXCELLENT; GOOD; FAIR; POOR

Renee Zellweger plays an executive who goes to Minnesota to shut down a plant in the romantic comedy New In Town.

Star pair dish on New in Town

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

Movie **feature**

"I refuse to be upstaged by Mother Nature!" shouted actor-musician Harry Connick Jr. in a rattling West Hollywood hotel room recently. See, together with co-star Rénee Zellweger, he was promoting their latest movie when a California earthquake suddenly struck.

Only it didn't. After a few minutes and some nervous laughs, everyone realized the vibrations were in fact, due to some aggressive machinery on the floor below and indeed not Mother Nature.

Still, if nothing else, the impromptu moment gave us all a glimpse into the type of unrehearsed levity the pair had just experienced making their latest romantic-comedy New In Town — in theatres next Friday.

"The prospect of working with Renée and the idea I had about working with her (was what) really made me want to do it," says Connick Jr., before joking dryly: "Unfortunately none of the things I thought would happen happened, but still the idea of it was great."

The story of an ambitious executive (Zellweger) who temporarily relocates to Minnesota to shut down a plant run by a rugged union boss (Connick Jr.), New In Town was actually filmed in Winnipeg last year during a record-breaking cold snap. Like the earthquake-that-wasn't, the cast refused to let Mother Nature dampen their spirits.

"I don't think there was a day when we weren't laughing until our eyelids were frozen together from tears," said Zellweger, adding that such extreme weather may have actually helped bond the group.

As for living in Manitoba over the winter, Zellweger was happy to remain "new in town" herself and admits, like her character, she too lacks a certain doggedness to reside in climates where the temperature is low and the snow is deep.

"The tenacity of the people was just so impressive. To me, when you look outside, you think, 'where's the road? I guess there's no driving today?' but that's not the case," said a surprised Zellweger. "Everybody just gets up and gets on with it like it's normal."

Twilight actress off to Adventureland

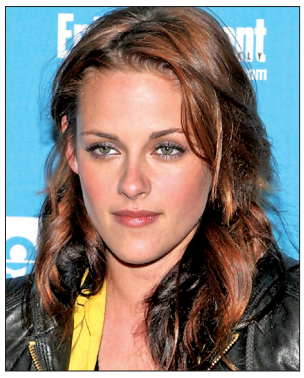
FEATURE Vampire romance Twilight hurtled Kristen Stewart to the kind of fame that can turn a life into a roller coaster ride, so it seems appropriate that her new movie revolves around an amusement park.

Adventureland, which premiered this week at the Sundance Film Festival, is one of a string of quirky movies Stewart, 18, has starred-in since her first film at age 11.

But none of those movies ever brought the actress the sort of attention she has received the last two months since Twilight struck gold at box offices with more than $324 million US worldwide since its November debut.

In the movie, Stewart portrayed Bella Swan, a love-struck teen adored by millions of young girls after they began devouring the series of books on which the movie is based.

Stewart is a child of Hollywood — the daughter of a stage manager and a script supervisor — and her Los Angeles upbringing provided a close up view of fame that has helped her handle the three-ring media circus of Hollywood celebrity.



Kristen Stewart

"I grew up on a set," she told Reuters at Sundance. "I don't take it as seriously, and then at the same time I take it more seriously than anyone. It's like a balance."

Adventureland is a coming-of-age movie about a recent college graduate named James, played by The Squid and the Whale star Jesse Eisenberg, who takes a summer job at an amusement park.

There, he falls in love with a tortured but sincere young carnival worker named Em Lewin (Stewart) and finds that true love is an adventure in and of itself.

Miramax Films will release the movie in March, following its premiere at Sundance – the No. 1 U.S. gathering for independent film. At the festival, a quirky and offbeat love story like Adventureland can gain the kind of media attention it needs to lure audiences to box offices.

Adventureland director Greg Mottola, who made 2007 hit comedy Superbad, said he has counseled Stewart about handling fame and fortune because the microscopic scrutiny by the media can be overwhelming for a teenager.

"I think there are some people who have some innate movie star gene that lets them just walk into that, like a George Clooney," he said. "But it didn't happen to him when he was that young. So I feel for her, that's a really hard thing." REUTERS

Trio join Streep movie

PEOPLE Hunter Parrish, star of the Broadway musical Spring Awakening and a regular on the series Weeds, has joined the cast of an untitled romantic comedy from writer-director Nancy Meyers (Something's Gotta Give).

Also joining the Universal Pictures project are Zoe Kazan, who has a supporting role in Revolutionary Road, and Lake Bell, who most recently appeared onscreen in Pride and Glory and What Happens in Vegas.

The Meyers film stars Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin and Steve Martin. It follows a woman dealing with empty-nest syndrome who is torn between her ex-husband (Baldwin) and a male friend (Martin).

Parrish plays Streep's youngest child, who is graduating from college and is about to head to the big city. Kazan is the middle child, who is about to move to Los Angeles and has a hard time dealing with the possibility of her parents reuniting.

Bell plays Baldwin's young wife.

REUTERS

Ruffalo back to directing project

PEOPLE Actor Mark Ruffalo's first stint as a feature director, Sympathy for Delicious, is back on track after a personal setback put the project on hold. The indie feature, which originally was to include James Franco (Milk) in the cast, fell into limbo after the December death of Ruffalo's brother, Scott. The project is now back on track, with Orlando Bloom (Pirates of the Caribbean) taking over for the unavailable Franco. Laura Linney is also on board.

REUTERS

Sex and the City pack agree to sequel, report claims
Us Weekly reports in its newest issue that Sarah Jessica Parker, 43, Kim Cattrall, 52, Cynthia Nixon, 42, and Kristin Davis, 43, have agreed to appear in the sequel to Sex and the City: The Movie. USWEEKLY.COM

Movies

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Saving Brendan Fraser

InFocus

Richard Crouse
mrchaos33@hotmail.com

Critics used to love Brendan Fraser. Early on Roger Ebert called him "subtle and attuned" and Barbara Ellen in The Times raved that he was "a revelation — so measured, suave and intrinsically watchable."

That was then. This is now.

Lately the tone of his reviews has taken a turn. "Noticeably uninvolved" and "worn out" are just two descriptions of his current work in movies like The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor. One blogger even wrote, with simple hateful eloquence, "His face makes me angry."

I thought of this as I watched Inkheart. A big budget fantasy adventure, it encapsulates everything that's wrong with Fraser's career. It's another forgettable performance in an unremarkable movie that allows the premise and the CGI to overshadow everything else. According to av club.com, in recent years this guy has spent so much time in front of a green screen "his children probably have traces of CGI in their DNA."

Of course Fraser would counter that he's not making films for the critics, but judging by the gross of the last Mummy movie, he's not making them for audiences either.

But let's put the snarkiness aside for a moment and remember a time when Fraser was actually considered a real actor. Years before he discovered the financial benefits of emoting in front of a green screen he made small, interesting, character-driven films.

For example, in Gods and Monsters Fraser played Clay Boone, a young straight ex-Marine who forms a bond with James Whale, the elderly gay director of Frankenstein played by Ian McKellen. Fraser's take on Clay is complicated but sympathetic as he forms a platonic relationship with the older man who becomes the father figure he never had. In this film Fraser holds his own against the masterful McKellen.

The Quiet American sees Fraser as Alden Pyle, an idealist who must learn to deal with moral ambiguity. Again his work is well crafted and thoughtful.

Further acting high points include the image obsessed district attorney in Crash; and Journey to the End of Night's Paul, a degenerate gambler who double-crosses his father and tries to run off with the cash.

Not since Orson Welles voiced commercials for a frozen pea company has one actor squandered his talent so flagrantly, so let's remember Fraser for the good ones and hope that he gets over his green screen addiction sooner rather than later.

Richard Crouse is the author of Son of the 100 Best Movies You've Never Seen and film critic for CTV's Canada AM.

Inkheart better on page

Inkheart
Director: Iain Softley
Stars: Brendan Fraser
Classification: STC
Rating: ●●½

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

REVIEW In his new movie Inkheart, Brendan Fraser utters this slice of reverberating dialogue: "The written word is a powerful thing. Better be careful with it."

Nowhere is this perhaps better demonstrated than in the new fantasy adaptation of Cornelia Funke's hit novel in which Fraser — as bookbinder Mo Folchart — possesses the supernatural ability to bring fictional characters to life just by reading them aloud.

Sure, that might sound like a cool party trick but while Folchart uncovered his talent reading a tome called Inkheart, he also discovered that a real person is traded in reciprocation — namely, his wife.

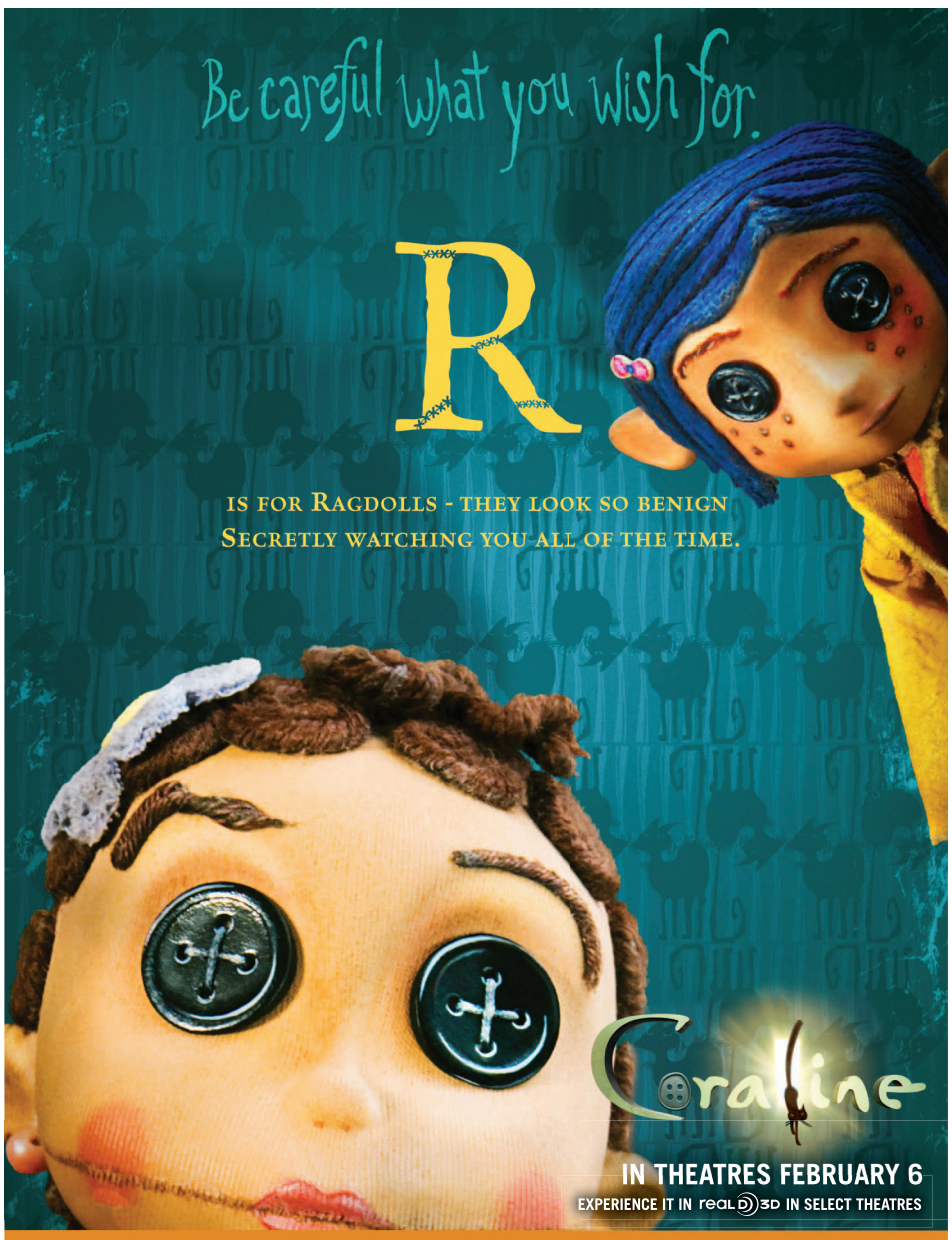
Now, a decade later, the only way to rescue her is to find a copy of Inkheart and read her back out of the novel.

Along the way, Folchart and his daughter (Eliza Bennett) meet a dizzying array of characters including the book's desperate hero (Paul Bettany), a conspiring antagonist called Capricorn as well as flying monkeys, a unicorn, Rapunzel and Toto from The Wizard of Oz.

While director Iain Softley is able to engage with big epic stunts and grand effects, Inkheart ironically loses its audience with a convoluted story that never fully satisfies many of its own questions. The notion of swapping real folks with characters in a book is intriguing, but the film never fully gives it reason.

On the web

- To see an Inkheart trailer, and screen times, visit metronews.ca/movies



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Odds of winning depend on number of entries received. Winners will be required to answer a skill testing question. For full contest rules and details, visit www.metronews.ca

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metro Do it daily.

Movies

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Movie **morsels**

Bride Wars

●●

REVIEW Kate Hudson and Anne Hathaway actually made a few funnies in the film Bride Wars. The generically-titled flick about two BFFs turned frenemies in the preamble to their coinciding nuptials is just in time for one of the most popular wedding-movie months of the year. And although the storyline is gag-me-with-a-spoon predictable, the cynical, cut-throat humour comes with a good dollop of wit that offers a refreshing surprise.

Robyn Young/Metro Canada

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

●●●

REVIEW Based on a tale by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Button tells the life story of a man who is born with the physicality of an 80-year-old but mysteriously ages in reverse meeting impossible challenges along the way. If that vaguely sounds a bit Forrest Gumpish, don't be surprised – Gump's Eric Roth penned this human epic too. There's a lot of talk about Brad Pitt possibly sneaking an Oscar, and he definitely gives the best performance of his career.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

Defiance

●●½

REVIEW Actor Daniel Craig has traded in the Aston-Martin for a ragged horse and frankly, I don't blame him. After all, playing James Bond can pretty much kill a career if you don't diversify your portfolio. But while Craig may surprise a few fans with Defiance, this true Second World War drama ultimately cannot live up to its own ambition.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

Twilight

●●

REVIEW Kristen Stewart stars as Bella, a young girl who moves to a small town and becomes instantly captivated by a classmate named Edward (Robert Pattinson) who is part of a very peculiar and insular family known as the Cullens. As Bella becomes more attracted to Edward, she discovers that the Cullens are a clan of vampires … but very safe emo-vampires who only drink animal blood and spend of most of their time silently emoting and looking pretty rather than preying on helpless victims.

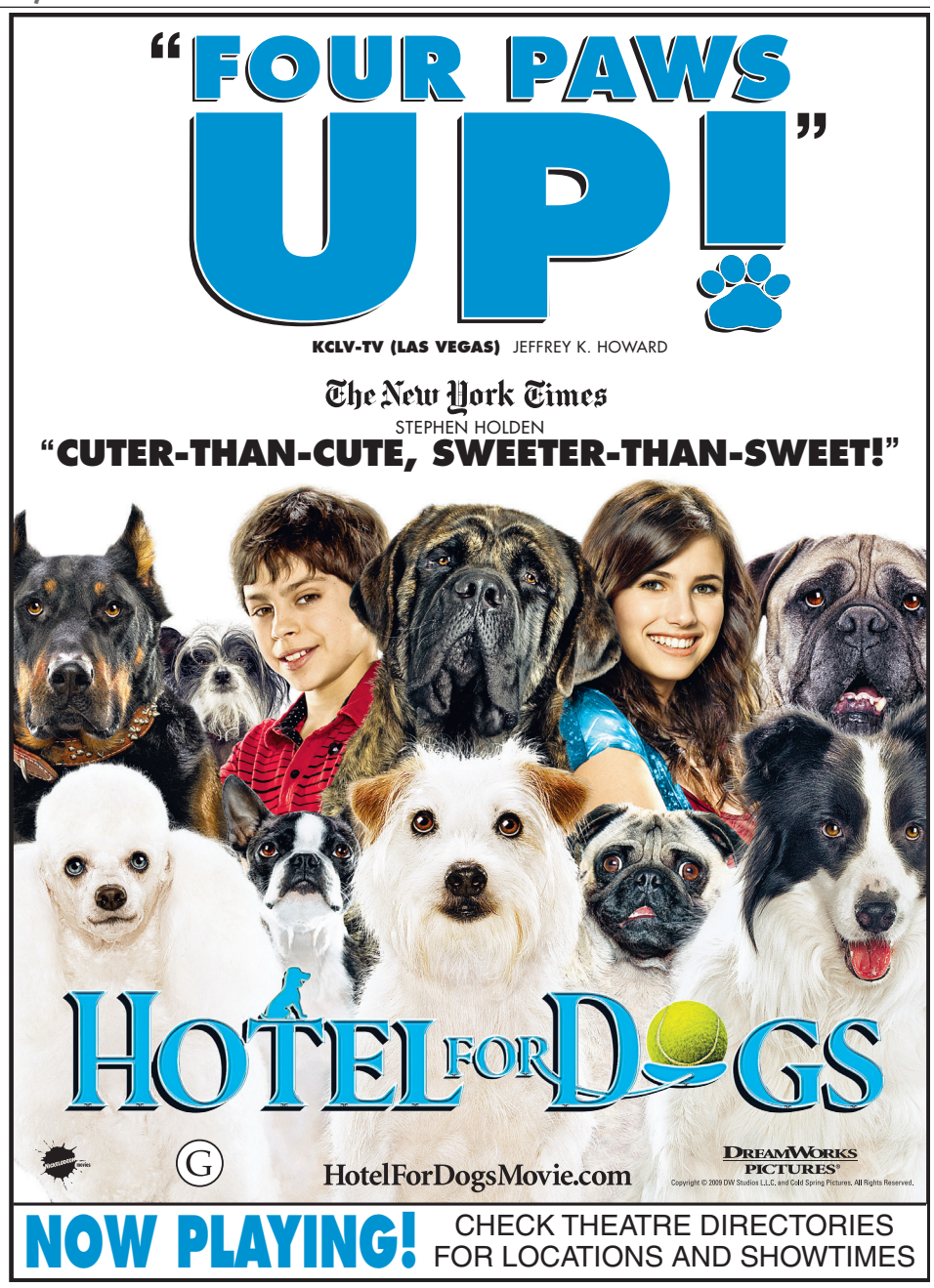
Phil Brown/Metro Canada

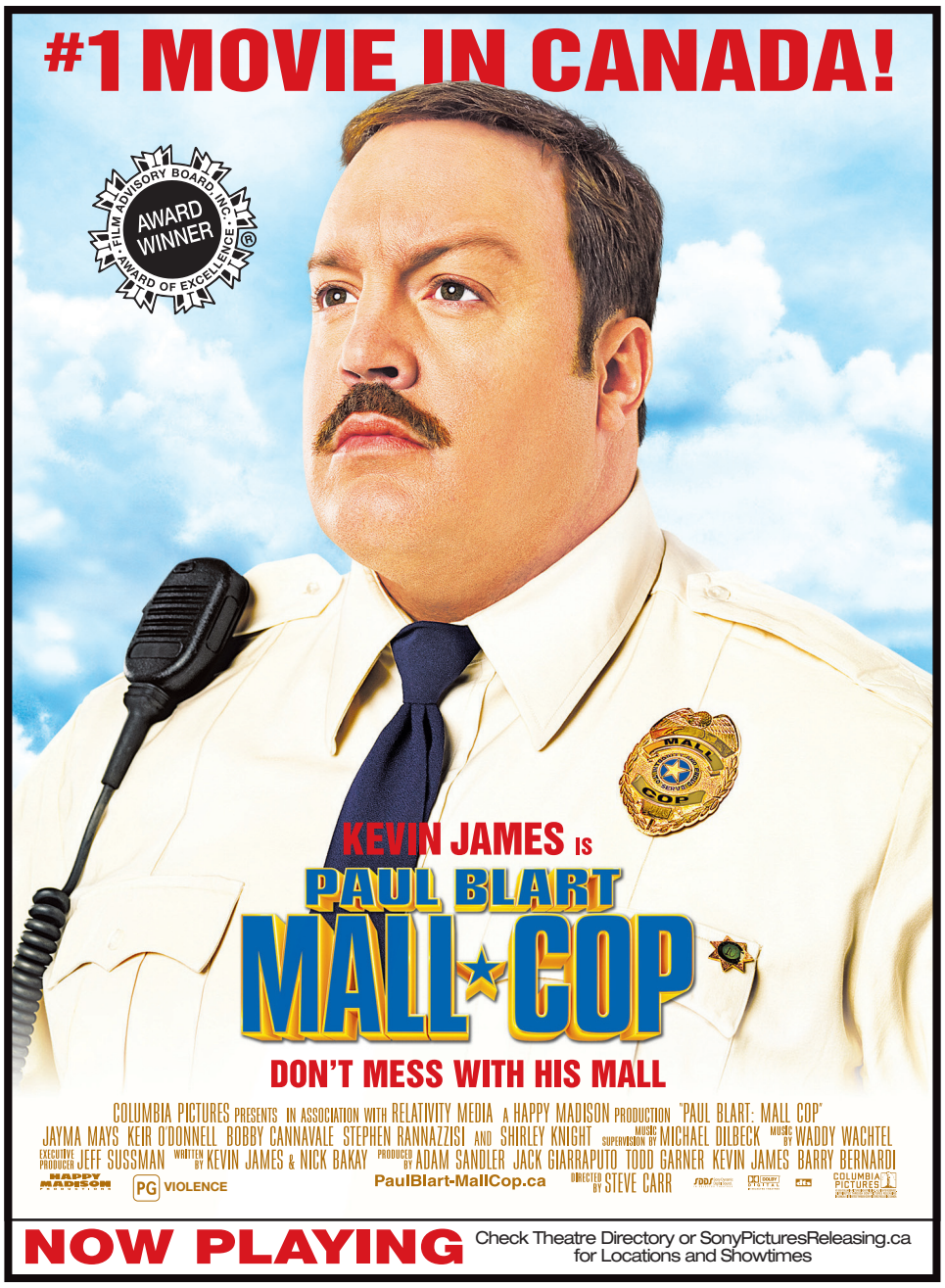
The Wrestler

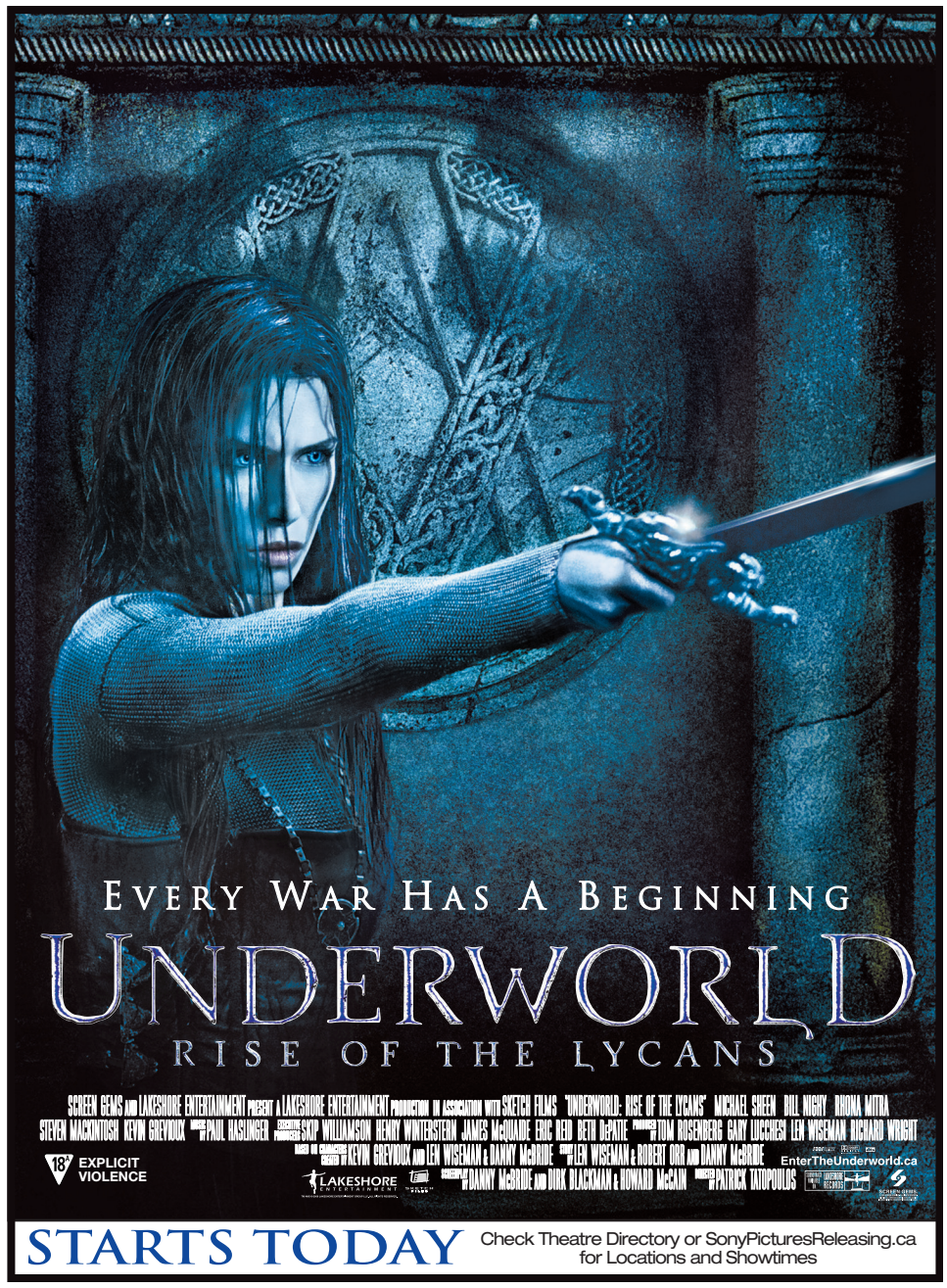
●●●●

REVIEW The Wrestler tells the tale of downtrodden, past his prime rope-rider Randy (The Ram) Robinson — played by Mickey Rourke — and the desperate web of misery he weaves in the twilight of his lifE. The film is a gritty, low budget, intimate and emotionally shattering peek into a heart without hope.

Chris Alexander/Metro Canada







Screen Times

This week's new releases are highlighted in pink.

THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., JAN. 23 TO THURS., JAN. 29. TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. COMPLETE LISTINGS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT METRONEWS.CA/MOVIES.

VANCOUVER

OMNIMAX THEATRE SCIENCE WORLD
1455 Quebec St., 604-443-7443

The Alps (STC) Fri-Thu 3 Fri 7:30
Grand Canyon Adventure: River at Risk (STC) Fri-Thu 1
Journey Into Amazing Caves (STC) A.M. Fri-Thu 11 Sat 7:30
Pulse: A Stomp Odyssey (STC) Sat-Thu 5
Roving Mars (G) Fri-Thu 12-2-4 Fri-Sat 8:30

CN IMAX THEATRE
201-999 Canada Place, 604-682-4629

The Dark Knight: The IMAX Experience (14A) Fri-Tue 2-8 Wed 2 Thu 2-8
Space Station 3D (G) Fri-Tue 1-6 Wed 1 Thu 1-6
Wild Ocean (G) Fri 12-7 Sat-Sun 12-5-7 Mon-Tue 12-7 Wed 12 Thu 12-7

DUNBAR THEATRE
4555 Dunbar Street, 604-222-2991

Defiance (14A) Fri 7-9:45 Sat-Sun 3:45-7-9:45 Mon-Thu 7-9:45

FIFTH AVENUE CINEMAS
2110 Burrard Street, 604-734-7469

Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Thu 1:10-3:50-6:50-9:20
Milk (PG) Fri-Wed 1:20-4-6:40-9:10 Thu 1:20-4-9:10
The Reader (18A) Fri-Thu 1:40-4:20-7:10-9:40
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri-Thu 1:50-4:30-7:20-9:50
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) Fri-Thu 1:30-4:10-7-9:30

GRANVILLE
855 Granville St., 604-684-4000

Bedtime Stories (G) Sat-Sun 1-4:20
My Bloody Valentine (18A) Fri 7:05-9:55 Sat-Sun 1:05-4:10-7:05-9:55 Mon-Thu 7:05-9:55
Quantum of Solace (14A) Fri-Thu 7-9:50
Rachel Getting Married (PG) Fri 6:50-9:35 Sat-Sun 1:15-4:05-6:50-9:35 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:35
Seven Pounds (PG) Fri-Thu 6:45-9:40
The Tale of Despereaux (G) Sat-Sun 1:10-3:55
Twilight (PG) Fri 6:55-9:45 Sat 12:50-4-6:55-9:45 Sun 12:50-9:45 Mon-Thu 6:55-9:45
The Unborn (14A) Fri 7:10-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:55-3:50-7:10-9:30 Mon-Thu 7:10-9:30
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 5

HOLLYWOOD THEATRE
3123 W. Broadway, 604-738-3211
hollywoodtheatre.ca

Roman de Gare (PG) Fri 9:40 Sat-Sun 3:40-9:40 Mon-Thu 9:40
Tell No One (14A) Fri 7:30 Sat-Sun 1:30-7:30 Mon-Thu 7:30

OAKRIDGE
650 West 41st Ave., 604-263-1944

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri 7-9:25 Sat-Sun 1:15-4-7-9:25 Mon-Thu 7-9:25
Marley & Me (G) Fri 6:45-9:35 Sat-Sun 1-3:50-6:45-9:35 Mon-Thu 6:45-9:35
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) Dolby Stereo Digital Fri 7:15-9:50 Dolby Stereo Digital Sat-Sun 1:30-4:15-7:15-9:50 Dolby Stereo Digital Mon-Thu 7:15-9:50

PACIFIC CINÉMATHÈQUE
1131 Howe Street, 604-688-3456
cinematheque.bc.ca

The Ceremony (STC) Fri 7:15 Sat 9:10
Gohatto (14A) Fri 9:35 Sun 7:15
The Pleasures of the Flesh (STC) Thu 7:30
Sing a Song of Sex (STC) Thu 9:15
The Sun's Burial (STC) Mon 8:50 Wed 7:30
A Town of Love and Hope (STC) Mon 7:30 Wed 9:15
Violence at Noon (STC) Sat 7:15

PARK THEATRE
3440 Cambie Street, 604-876-2747

Welcome to the Sticks (PG) Fri 4-7-9:15 Sat-Sun 1:30-4-7-9:15 Mon-Thu 4-7-9:15

RIDGE THEATRE
3131 Arbutus Street, 604-738-6311

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Sat 2:30-6-9:15 Sun-Tue 4-7:30 Wed 3-9:15

RIO ON BROADWAY
1660 E. Broadway, 604-878-Film
riotheatre.ca

A Clockwork Orange (STC) Sat 12
The Fly (STC) Fri 12
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri 7-9:30 Sat-Sun 4:30-7-9:30 Mon-Thu 7-9:30
Videodrome (STC) Fri
The Warriors (STC) Sat

SCOTIABANK THEATRE VANCOUVER
900 Burrard St., 604-630-1407

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-4:30-8:30
Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:40-4-7:20-10:30
Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Thu 1:20-4:20-7:15-10:10
Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7

Christian Bale stars in The Dark Knight, which is currently in theatres.

Marley & Me (G) Fri-Tue 1:10-3:50-6:40-9:35 Wed 1:10-3:50-9:35 Thu 1:10-3:50-6:40-9:35
Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 10
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri-Thu 12:50-3:40-6:50-9:55
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1-3:30-7-9:45 No Passes Fri-Thu 1:30-4:15-7:30-10:15
The Wrestler (14A) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-7:05-10
Yes Man (PG) Fri-Tue 1:15-4:10-7:40-10:20 Wed 1:15-4:10-10:20 Thu 1:15-4:10-7:40-10:20

TINSELTOWN
International Village, 88 West Pender, 3rd floor, 604-806-0799
cinemark.com

Bride Wars (G) Fri-Thu 12:25-2:40-5:20-7:45-9:55
Doubt (G) Fri-Thu 12:30-2:55-5:25-7:55-10:25
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri-Thu 1:05-4:15-7:20-10:10
Hotel for Dogs (G) No Passes Fri-Tue 12-2:20-4:40-7:05-9:30 No Passes Wed 12-2:20-4:40-9:30 No Passes Thu 12-2:20-4:40-7:05-9:30
Inkheart (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:50-4:20-7-9:35
Last Chance Harvey (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:20-2:50-5:15-7:50-10:20
Notorious (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:15-4:10-7:15-10:05
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:15-2:45-5:05-7:25-9:45
The Reader (18A) Fri-Thu 1:35-4:25-7:10-10
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) Fri-Thu 12:05-1:30-3-4:30-6:05-7:30-9-10:30
Valkyrie (PG) Fri-Thu 2-4:45-7:40-10:35

VANCITY THEATRE
Vancouver International Film Centre
1181 Seymour Street, 604-683-Film
vifc.org

Call Theatre For Showtimes (STC) Fri-Thu
Spark FX 09' Film Festival (STC) Fri-Thu

VAN EAST CINEMA
2290 Commercial Drive, 604-251-1313
vaneast.com

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri 6:10-9:15 Sat-Sun 3:10-6:10-9:15 Mon-Thu 6:10-9:15

NORTH SHORE

ESPLANADE 6
200 West Esplanade, 604-983-2762

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri 7-9:20 Sat-Sun 1:10-3:40-7-9:20 Mon-Thu 7-9:20
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri 8 Sat-Sun 1-4:30-8 Mon-Thu 8
Gran Torino (14A) Fri 7:10-9:45 Sat-Sun 1:20-4-7:10-9:45 Mon-Thu 7:10-9:45
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri 6:50-9:10 Sat-Sun 1:45-4:15-6:50-9:10 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:10
My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Fri 7:30-9:50 Sat-Sun 1:30-3:50-7:30-9:50 Mon-Thu 7:30-9:50
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) Fri 7:20-9:30 Sat-Sun 2-4:40-7:20-9:30 Mon-Thu 7:20-9:30

PARK & TILFORD
333 Brooksbank Ave., 604-985-3911

Bride Wars (G) Fri 7:20-9:40 Sat-Sun 12:55-3:40-7:20-9:40 Mon-Thu 7:20-9:40
Defiance (14A) Fri 6:50-9:50 Sat-Sun 12:35-3:50-6:50-9:50 Mon-Thu 6:50-9:50
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri 7-10 Sat-Sun 12:45-4-7-10 Mon-Thu 7-10 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1
Marley & Me (G) Fri 6:30-9:20 Sat-Sun 12:30-3:20-6:30-9:20 Mon-Thu 6:30-9:20
Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 10
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri 6:40-9:30 Sat-Sun 12:40-3:30-6:40-9:30 Mon-Thu 6:40-9:30
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 7:10-10:10 Sat-Sun 12:50-4:10-7:10-10:10 Mon-Thu 7:10-10:10 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1

RICHMOND

RICHMOND CENTRE 6
6551 #3 Road, 604-273-7173

Bride Wars (G) Fri 4:30-7-9:35 Sat 1:10-4:30-7-9:35 Sun 1:10-4:30-7 Mon-Thu 4:30-7
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri 4:15-7:40 Sat-Sun 12:55-4:15-7:40 Mon-Thu 4:15-7:40
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri 4:25-6:55-9:30 Sat 1:05-4:25-6:55-9:30 Sun 1:05-4:25-6:55 Mon-Thu 4:25-6:55
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri 4:35-7:15-9:40 Sat 1:15-4:35-7:15-9:40 Sun 1:15-4:35-7:15 Mon-Thu 4:35-7:15
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri 4:40-7:25-9:55 No Passes Sat 1:20-4:40-7:25-9:55 No Passes Sun 1:20-4:40-7:25 No Passes Mon-Thu 4:40-7:25
Valkyrie (PG) Fri 4:20-7:05-9:50 Sat 1-4:20-7:05-9:50 Sun 1-4:20-7:05 Mon-Thu 4:20-7:05

SILVERCITY RIVERPORT
14211 Entertainment Way, 604-272-7280

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Thu 1:05-3:50
Bride Wars (G) Fri-Thu 1:55-4:45-7:05-9:30
Chandni Chowk to China (PG) Fri-Thu 1-4:30-8:10
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-4:30-8:15
The Dark Knight: The IMAX Experience (14A) No Passes Fri 12:15-3:30-7-10:30 Sat-Thu 12:15-3:30-7-10:30
Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:45-4:15-7:25-10:40
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri-Thu 12:55-3:55-7:15-10:10
Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Thu 1:45-4:40-7:45-10:35
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 1:15-4:10-6:45-9:35
Inkheart (PG) Fri-Thu 1:50-5:7:40-10:20
Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7
Last Chance Harvey (PG) Fri-Tue 12:25-3:45-6:40-9:40 Wed 12:25-3:45-10 Thu 12:25-3:45-6:40-9:40
Marley & Me (G) Fri-Sat 1-4-6:55-9:50 Sun 1-4-9:50 Mon-Wed 1-4-6:55-9:50 Thu 4-6:55-9:50 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1
Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 10
My Bloody Valentine (18A) Fri-Sat 2-5:05-7:55-10:30 Sun 2-7:55-10:30 Mon-Thu 2-5:05-7:55-10:30
Notorious (18A) Fri-Thu 1:40-4:35-7:30-10:45
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Thu 1:35-4:25-6:50-9:15
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri-Thu 1:30-4:50-7:50-10:45
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 12:40-4:05-7-9:55 Sat-Wed 12:40-4:05-7-9:55 Thu 4:05-7-9:55 Star & Strollers Screening Thu 1
The Unborn (14A) Fri-Thu 7:10-10:25
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 12:20-3:30-7:20-9:45
The Wrestler (14A) Fri-Thu 1:20-4:20-7:35-10:15
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 5

BURNABY

DOLPHIN CINEMAS
4555 E. Hastings St., 604-293-0332

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 8:30
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri 6:30 Sat-Sun 1:30-4-6:30 Mon-Thu 6:30
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri 6:30-8:30 Sat-Sun 4:30-6:30-8:30 Mon-Thu 6:30-8:30

SILVERCITY METROPOLIS
4700 Kingsway Ave., 604-435-7474

Bride Wars (G) Fri-Sat 12:50-4:20-7:05-10:05 Sun 12:50-7:05-10:05 Mon-Thu 12:50-4:20-7:05-10:05
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:30-4-7:45
Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:40-3:45-6:50-10
Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Tue 1-4:15-7:15-10:10 Wed 1-4:15-10:10 Thu 1-4:15-7:15-10:10
Inkheart (PG) Fri-Thu 12:45-4:10-6:55-9:45
Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7
Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 10
My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Fri-Thu 12:55-4:05-7:20-10:15
Notorious (18A) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:40-7-10
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:50-6:45-9:50
The Unborn (14A) Fri-Sat 1:10-3:55-7:40-10:15 Sun 1:10-3:55-10:15 Mon-Thu 1:10-3:55-7:40-10:15
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:15-4:25-7:35-10:15
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 5

STATION SQUARE
220-6200 McKay Ave., 604-434-7711

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri 4:55-7:25 Sat 2:15-4:55-7:25 Sun 2:15-4:55 Mon-Thu 4:55
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri 4:30-7:10-10:10 Sat 1:50-4:30-7:10-10:10 Sun 1:50-4:30-7:10 Mon-Thu 4:30-7:10
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri 4:45-7-9:45 Sat 1:55-4:45-7-9:45 Sun 1:55-4:45-7 Mon-Thu 4:45-7
Last Chance Harvey (PG) Fri 5-7:30-10:15 Sat 2:05-5-7:30-10:15 Sun 2:05-5-7:30 Mon-Thu 5-7:30
Marley & Me (G) Fri 4:35-7:05-9:55 Sat 2-4:35-7:05-9:55 Sun 2-4:35-7:05 Mon-Thu 4:35-7:05
Twilight (PG) Fri 4:45-7:15-9:50 Sat 2:10-4:45-7:15-9:50 Sun 2:10-4:45-7:15 Mon-Thu 4:45-7:15
Valkyrie (PG) Fri 4:50-7:20-10:05 Sat 1:45-4:50-7:20-10:05 Sun 1:45-4:50-7:20 Mon-Thu 4:50-7:20
Yes Man (PG) Fri-Sat 10 Sun-Thu 7:25

NEW WEST/ COQUITLAM

SILVERCITY COQUITLAM
170 Schoolhouse Street, 604-523-2911

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-6:45
Bride Wars (G) Fri-Thu 1:20-4:20-7:20-10:20
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:10-4:10-8:10
Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:05-3:15-6:35-10:05
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri-Thu 1:15-4:15-7:15-10:15
Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Tue 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:30 Wed 4:30-7:30-10:30 Thu 1:30-4:30-7:30-10:30 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri-Thu 12:35-3:35-6:40-9:40
Inkheart (PG) Fri-Thu 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:10
Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7
Last Chance Harvey (PG) Fri-Thu 12:50-3:50-6:50-9:50
Marley & Me (G) Fri-Tue 12:30-3:30-6:30-9:30 Wed 12:30-3:30-9:55 Thu 12:30-3:30-6:30-9:30
Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 10
My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Fri-Thu 1:50-4:50-7:55-10:45
Notorious (18A) Fri-Thu 1:35-4:35-7:35-10:35
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Tue 12:15-2:40-5:10-7:50-10:45 Wed 5:10-7:50-10:45 Thu 12:15-2:40-5:10-7:50-10:45 Wed 1
The Reader (18A) Fri-Thu 12:20-3:20-6:20-9:20
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri-Thu 12:55-3:55-6:55-9:55
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 1-4-7-10 Sat-Thu 1-4-7-10
The Tale of Despereaux (G) Fri-Thu 1:05
The Unborn (14A) Fri-Sat 4:05-7:05-10:05 Sun 7:05-10:05 Mon-Thu 4:05-7:05-10:05
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 12-2:30-5-8-10:35
Valkyrie (PG) Fri-Thu 9:45
The Wrestler (14A) Fri-Thu 1:40-4:40-7:40-10:40
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 5
Yes Man (PG) Fri-Sat 1:45-4:45-7:45-10:40 Sun 1-4-10:40 Mon-Thu 1:45-4:45-7:45-10:40

SURREY/WHITE ROCK/LANGLEY

CLOVA
5732-176th St., Surrey, 604-541-9527

Happy-Go-Lucky (PG) Fri-Thu 9
Yes Man (PG) Fri-Thu 7

HOLLYWOOD 3 CINEMA
7125-138th Street, Surrey, 604-592-4441

Australia (PG) Sat-Sun 12
Bolt (G) Fri 4:50 Sat-Sun 2:45-4:50 Mon-Thu 4:50
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (G) Sat-Sun 2:45
Quantum of Solace (14A) Fri-Thu 9:15
Seven Pounds (PG) Fri-Thu 9:10
The Tale of Despereaux (G) Fri 4:50 Sat-Sun 2:30-4:50 Mon-Thu 4:50
Twilight (PG) Fri 7 Sat-Sun 12:10-7 Mon-Thu 7
Valkyrie (PG) Fri-Thu 9:30
Yes Man (PG) Fri 4:50-7 Sat-Sun 12:30-4:50-7 Mon-Thu 4:50-7

STRAWBERRY HILL GRANDE
12161-72nd Ave, Surrey, 604-501-9400

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Thu 1:20
Bride Wars (G) Fri-Thu 12:30-3:35-6:55-9:30
Chandni Chowk to China (PG) Fri-Sun 12-3:20-6:45-10:05 Mon-Thu 12-3:20-7:35
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Thu 12:10-4-7:40
Defiance (14A) Fri-Thu 12:20-3:45-6:50-9:55
Ghajini (Hindi w/e.s.t.) (14A) Fri-Sat 3:50-7:45 Sun 9 Mon-Thu 3:50-7:45
Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Thu 12:50-3:40-7:15-10:10
Inkheart (PG) Fri-Tue 1:40-4:20-7:20-9:50 Wed 4:20-7:20-9:50 Thu 1:40-4:20-7:20-9:50 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
Larger Than Life (STC) Wed 7
My Bloody Valentine (18A) Fri-Thu 1
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Thu 12:40-3:55-7:25-9:45
Raaz: The Mystery Continues (Hindi w/e.s.t.) (STC) Fri-Thu 3:30-7-10
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:05 Sat-Tue 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:05 Wed 4:10-7:10-10:05 Thu 1:10-4:10-7:10-10:05 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 1
The Unborn (14A) Fri-Tue 1:30-4:05-7:05-9:35 Wed 1:30-4:05-9:35 Thu 1:30-4:05-7:05-9:35
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Thu 1:50-4:30-7:30-10:15
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 5

STUDIO 12 GUILDFORD
15051-101st Ave, Surrey, 604-581-1176

Bride Wars (G) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Sat 1:50-4:35-7:20-9:40 Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Sun 1:50-9:40 Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Mon-Thu 1:50-4:35-7:20-9:40
Chandni Chowk to China (PG) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:05-4:30-8
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 9
Frost/Nixon (PG) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:10-4:10-7:05-10
Gran Torino (14A) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:25-4:15-7:10-9:55
Hotel for Dogs (G) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:35-3:55-6:45
Inkheart (PG) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:20-4:05-6:50-9:30
Last Chance Harvey (PG) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:45-4:25-6:55
My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:40-4:45-7:30-10:05
Notorious (18A) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:15-4:20-7:15-10:10
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:30-4-7-9:25
Revolutionary Road (14A) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1-3:50-6:40-9:35
The Unborn (14A) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 9:20
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Fri-Thu 1:55-4:40-7:45-10:15
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Stadium Seating, Dolby Stereo Digital Sun 5

RIALTO
1732-152nd Street, White Rock, 604-541-9527, criterontheatres.com

Gran Torino (14A) Fri 7-9:15 Sat-Sun 2:10-7-9:15 Mon-Thu 7-9:15
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri 7:10-9:25 Sat-Sun 2-7:10-9:25 Mon-Thu 7:10-9:25

CRITERION 4 WHITE ROCK
2381 King George Highway, 604-531-7456, criterontheatres.com

Bride Wars (G) Fri-Tue 7:20-9:25 Wed 9:25 Thu 7:20-9:25
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri 7-9:35 Sat-Sun 2-7-9:35 Mon-Thu 7-9:35
Marley & Me (G) Sat-Sun 2:20
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri 7:30-9:30 Sat-Sun 2:30-7:30-9:30 Mon-Thu 7:30-9:30
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) Fri 7:10-9:40 Sat-Sun 2:10-7:10-9:40 Mon-Thu 7:10-9:40

COLOSSUS LANGLEY
20090-91A Ave, Langley, 604-513-8747

Bedtime Stories (G) Fri-Sun 12:50-3:40-6:55 Mon-Thu 3:40-6:55
Bride Wars (G) Fri-Sun 1:05-4:05-7:45-10:10 Mon-Thu 4:05-7:45-10:10
The Curious Case of Benjamin Button (PG) Fri-Sun 12:45-4:25-8:10 Mon-Thu 4:25-8:10
The Dark Knight: The IMAX Experience (14A) No Passes Fri 12-3:15-7-10:15 Sat-Sun 12-3:15-7-10:15 Mon-Thu 3:15-7-10:15
Defiance (14A) Fri-Sun 12:30-3:35-6:55-10:05 Mon-Thu 3:35-6:55-10:05
Frost/Nixon (PG) Fri-Sun 12:40-4:20-7:20-10:15 Mon-Thu 4:20-7:20-10:15
Gran Torino (14A) Fri-Sun 12:25-3:30-6:50-10 Mon-Thu 3:30-6:50-10
Hotel for Dogs (G) Fri-Sun 12:35-3:50-7:15-9:50 Mon-Thu 3:50-7:15-9:50
Inkheart (PG) Fri-Sun 12:15-3:45-7:15-9:55 Mon-Thu 3:45-7:15-9:55
Last Chance Harvey (PG) Fri-Sun 1:10-4-7-9:50 Mon-Thu 4-7-9:50
Metropolitan Opera: Orfeo ed Euridice - Gluck (STC) Sat 10
My Bloody Valentine 3D (18A) Fri-Sun 12:15-4:25-7:40-10:20 Mon-Thu 4:25-7:40-10:20
Notorious (18A) Fri-Sun 12:55-4:10-7:05-10:30 Mon-Thu 4:10-7:05-10:30
Paul Blart: Mall Cop (PG) Fri-Sun 12:20-4:05-7:10-10:10 Mon-Tue 4:05-7:10-10:10 Wed 7:10-10:10 Thu 4:05-7:10-10:10 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 3
Revolutionary Road (14A) Fri-Sun 12:10-4:30-7:35-10:20 Mon-Thu 4:30-7:35-10:20
Slumdog Millionaire (14A) No Passes Fri 1-4:30-7:30-10:30 Sat-Sun 1-4:30-7:30-10:30 Mon-Tue 4:30-7:30-10:30 Wed 7:30-10:30 Thu 4:30-7:30-10:30 Star & Strollers Screening Wed 3
The Unborn (14A) Fri-Thu 10
Underworld: Rise of the Lycans (18A) No Passes Fri-Sun 1:20-4:35-7:50-10:25 No Passes Mon-Thu 4:35-7:50-10:25
Valkyrie (PG) Fri-Sat 12:05-3:55-7:10-10:25 Sun 12:05-3:55-10:25 Mon-Thu 3:55-7:10-10:25
The Wrestler (14A) Fri-Sun 1:25-4:10-7:25-10:15 Mon-Thu 4:10-7:25-10:15
WWE: Royal Rumble (STC) Sun 5
Yes Man (PG) Fri-Sat 1:15-4:15-7:30-10:30 Sun 1:15-7:30-10:30 Mon-Tue 4:15-7:30-10:30 Wed 4:15-10:30 Thu 4:15-7:30-10:30

The bestselling albums at Amazon.ca
1. Performing This Week ... Live At Ronnie Scott's, Jeff Beck, right; **2.** Slumdog Millionaire, Original Soundtrack; **3.** Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog, Various; **4.** Fleet Foxes, Fleet Foxes; **5.** Hit Man: Various. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Music

Franz Ferdinand embraces Soviet technology

SoundCheck

Alan Cross
alan@ongoinghistory.com

Franz Ferdinand singer Alex Kapranos looks pretty sharp for a man who, not 12 hours earlier, was in the middle of a sweaty club gig as part of a barnstorming promo ride for the group's third album. Drummer Paul Thomson isn't quite as chipper, although that can be attributed to a metabolism that doesn't process caffeine quite as efficiently. He perks up. Eventually.

After two albums in 18 months, it's been three years since the group's last album. So, what took so long? "Making this new record was different. The time it took wasn't so much a luxury as a necessity," sighs Kapranos.

"The adrenalin just runs out," offers Thomson.

There's been a substantial amount of fan speculation on the sound and direction of Tonight: Franz Ferdinand. Were the spiky, dual-tempo arrangements thrown in the bin? Was it going to have African influences? Or had it all gone Jamaican dub?

"There are elements to truth to all those things," Kapranos says. "We listened to African music and Dan Carey, our producer, comes from a dub background. But it's still a Franz Ferdinand record. I mean, I listen to Dizzy Gillespie, but it doesn't mean we're going to make a be-bop record."

Well, maybe, but Domino — FF's U.K. label — is going to put out a special version of the album mixed in a dub style. Kapranos and Thomas say it's an experiment. The version of the album that most people will hear, starting Tuesday, features experiments of its own, including the use of a long-forgotten Soviet-era synthesizer called a Polyvox.

"It was another case of reverse engineering where the Soviets went, 'Right, we can build our own version of these (things)' — and would get it kind of wrong," explain Kapranos. "But their 'kind of wrong' is 'kind of good.' And it's true with the Polyvox. There was an electronic engineer in Kiev, I think, and he wanted to build a Moog (a U.S.-built synth). He knew the theory of how a Moog was built and had heard what they sounded like but had never seen one. So he built this machine that looks like the control panel of a Soviet tank, with big knobs and dials Cyrillic labels everywhere. And it sounds … kind of vaguely like a Moog — but not really. It just sounds … cool."

The whole FF story is coming up on my Ongoing History of New Music the first week of February.

The Ongoing History of New Music can be heard on stations across Canada. Read more at ongoinghistory.com and exploremusic.com

A.C.'s Guilty pleasure

BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI
for Metro Canada

Don't worry if A.C. Newman's solo career confuses you. Usually, when a frontman for a successful band — in this case Vancouver's The New Pornographers —releases a solo album, it often sounds much different from the guy's day job. But not so with Newman, whose rich, Beach Boys-like pop stylings appears on everything he touches. Plus, to him, every record he releases comes from the same place.

"I think Get Guily is a louder record than Challengers is," says Newman, comparing his latest solo effort to his last New Pornographers record in the same breath. "I think I'm always trying to change it up, it doesn't matter whether it's a Pornographers album or not."

GETTY IMAGES FILE

New Pornographers frontman A.C. Newman has a new solo album.

Clearly, he doesn't view his New Pornographers-self as separate from his solo career. And, while Neko Case and Dan Bejar aren't singing on Get Guilty — Newman's second album sans supergroup — it's still got the same harmony laden tracks and sunny upbeat vibe that's made the now New York-based songwriter's band what it is.

So, if his own material isn't that different from his band's music, why put out a solo album at all? "There is no really good reason for it," he says. "I just do it because I can."

Newman points out that he wrote his first album — 2004's Slow Wonder — after thinking The New Pornographers were breaking up. Neko Case decided to embark on her own solo career, which meant his band wasn't touring. Instead of waiting around, he recorded Slow Wonder during the time off.

This time, however, Get Guilty, was written so he could "record the next New Pornographers record with a clean start in my head.

"I wrote it as kind of a palate cleaning," he explains further. "It's hard to describe, but for some reason, at the end of making Challengers, I decided I was going to write a solo record. There's one song on the disc that I started writing while the Pornographers were mixing. I left the studio and played it into my phone."

As he's talking Newman, again, wonders aloud why he decided to record another solo album, as if he just realized that it's somewhat redundant. "There's not really any logic to this," he remarks. "I guess it seemed too soon do another Pornos record."

St. John's to host 2010 Junos

The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences along with broadcast partner CTV announced yesterday that St. John's, N.L., will host the 2010 Juno Awards. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Mix of Six

HOT & HAPPENING WEEKEND EVENTS AROUND THE CITY
For more great events around the city, visit: **metronews.ca/entertainment**

SkyDive

When: On until Feb. 7
Where: Granville Island

In this gravity-defying comedy, two brothers tumbling at terminal velocity must untangle the threads of their dysfunctional relationship, long-abandoned dreams, and the Jungian interpretations of Madonna, Van Halen, and Corey Hart.

Five Days in March

When: Until Sunday, 9 p.m.
Where: Performance Works

Unaware of the war in Iraq, the slackers obsess over a love affair, capturing the impotence of the Gen Y in Japan. Actors slip in and out of character while playing out scenes. Tix: $30/24 advance, $32/26 at the door. Info: ticketstonight.ca.

Olympicraze

When: Saturday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Where: Kensington Community Centre

Get into the spirit of the Olympics. Try your hand at winter sports on the Nintendo Wii, play Olympic-inspired carnival games, make a medal and more. Free. Info: 604-718-6200.

Lil' Wayne

When: Saturday, 6:30 p.m.
Where: General Motors Place

Former star of the rap group Hot Boys, Lil' Wayne has fired up the music charts with hits such as A Milli and Lollipop and will be heating up General Motors Place with guests Gym Class Heroes and T-Pain. Tix: $55.75-$150.75 ticketmaster.ca

Daniel Packard's Flirtfest!

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Pop Opera

Award-winning date doctor Daniel Packard gives funny, but serious advice on how women can go after what they want from men. Open to both men and women. Tix: $59.99 or $39.99 if you sign up two or more. Info: rclub.ca.

Singing Tribute Angels

When: Sunday, 7 p.m.
Where: Roxy Nightclub

Money raised will go toward Alex's Lemonade Stand, a charity dedicated to gathering money for childhood cancer research. Event features numerous artists. Tix: $10 Info: 604-988-7885 or diannedennis@canada.com.

Metro's 7th Heaven: Metro taps what's hot right now

1 Bruce Springsteen

As the new boss — Barack Obama, that is — settles down in his job, the real Boss returns to business with this presciently titled album, Working on a Dream. With the U.S. finally getting a little love from the rest of the world, Springsteen's majestic slice of Americana might just be the soundtrack to the renewed romance.

2 Amy Winehouse

The velvet-throated train wreck is still keeping us on our toes. Has she found a new love? Will hubby Blake Fielder-Civil dump her? Has she really cleaned up, as claimed by daddy dear? Stack up the popcorn and stay tuned.

3 Slumdog Millionaire

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button might be the Oscar front-runner, but Slumdog is still the popular puppy. This rags-to-riches tale set in the unrelenting backdrop of Mumbai will probably be the most fun you'll have at the theatres now. The 10 Academy nods don't hurt, either.

4 2010 Honda Insight

Gearheads went all gooey over this revamped hybrid when it was recently unveiled at the Detroit and Montreal auto shows. Coming to Canadian dealers in April.

5 Heineken ad

Women have the walk-in closet. And now, thanks to this Dutch commercial, men have the walk-in beer cooler. YouTube it and watch yourself choke up at the very sight of this faux contraption.

6 Washington, D.C.

Has the hub of world power ever looked this sexy? Granted, you may never catch a glimpse of the O-Man himself but with free entries to most major attractions in the city, this is the place to go with the paltry travel budget the recession will allow.

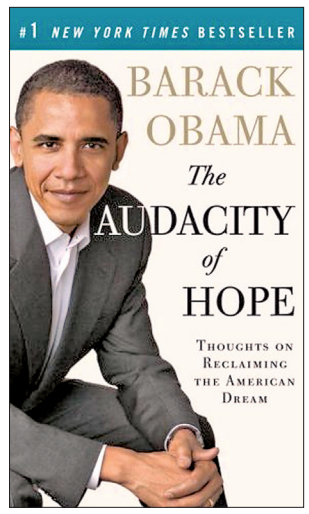
7 Obama books

Want to see beyond the charismatic smile and the fiery speeches? Here are five books that will get you up-to-date about the new U.S. president:

The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming The American Dream/Barack Obama: A vision for the future in his own words. A must-read.

Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance/Barack Obama: A personal take on his own life, with charming insights into his mixed heritage and how that made him the man he is today.

Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope/Nikki Grimes: This illustrated book is the perfect way to introduce your tiny ones to Obama.



Obama: From Promise to Power/David Mendell — A well-balanced biography.

The Obama Nation/Jerome R. Corsi: A well-researched case against Obama. Sounds blasphemous but worth a read.

Fun Sun VACATIONS

Departures from Vancouver

ANAHEIM
Super 8 Motel
$259
CAD per person
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April 22 – 25/09

SAN DIEGO
Hotel Circle
Comfort Inn South
$294
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April 22 – 25/09

LAS VEGAS
Circus Circus Las Vegas
$347
CAD per person
April 23 – 26/09

SAN FRANCISCO
Renoir Hotel
$374
CAD per person
April 22 – 25/09

BAJA MEXICO
Carnival Paradise℠
$448*
CAD per person
4 Day cruise from Long Beach.
April 20/09

ORLANDO
Howard Johnson Inn
Maingate East
$667
CAD per person
April 22 – 27/09

HONOLULU
AQUA Continental
$698
CAD per person
April 21 – 28/09

COSTA RICA
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$4M deal reached in reality TV lawsuit

TV Several major U.S. TV networks and the producers of such reality shows as Trading Spouses and The Bachelor have agreed to pay more than $4 million to settle two lawsuits claiming violations of California wage rules.

The settlement will benefit more than 400 workers who were part of the three-year-old class-action cases, and some of those individuals stand to reap tens of thousands of dollars, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, Emma Leheny, said Wednesday.

In addition to Trading Spouses and The Bachelor, the shows covered by the suits included The Will, Are You Hot?, Joe Millionaire and My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiance.

The litigation coincided with a broader ongoing effort by the Writers Guild of America to obtain a labour contract for the creative workers behind unscripted TV productions as a whole, such as American Idol and Survivor.

Some of those programs rank among the biggest hits on U.S. television and are far cheaper to produce than traditional prime-time dramas and sitcoms.

REUTERS

Wage, hour laws

- The suits claimed reality show employees routinely put in as much as 80 hours a week without overtime, were denied work breaks for meals and were forced to falsify their time cards, all in violation of state wage and hour laws.

Dakota Fanning ... with fangs?
Eonline.com is reporting the 14-year-old has been cast to play Jane opposite Robert Pattinson in New Moon, the upcoming sequel to box office megahit Twilight. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Television

Oscars promise to be a snooze

IntelleVision

Rick McGinnis
rick.mcginnis@metronews.ca

RED CARPET BLUES: The awards season culminates next month in the Oscars, the worst show ever that millions of people watch with what we can only assume is the hope that a celebrity will embarrass themselves with a blubbering acceptance speech that bares their pitiful insecurity for all the world to see.

Actually, the conventional wisdom is that people watch the interminable movie awards ceremony to see a film they enjoyed win, with the corollary effect that the highest-rated Oscars are the ones where a blockbuster like Titanic or a Lord Of The Rings film does a sweep. If this is true — and there's more than enough evidence to assume that it is — then Marc Caro of the Chicago Tribune is right and ABC will be taking a bath on its broadcast this year.

Nominations for the Oscars were announced yesterday, and conspicuously absent was The Dark Knight, a film whose massive box office clearly inspired reverse esteem in the Academy's voters. Only a posthumous nod for Heath Ledger's Joker as Best Supporting Actor put The Dark Knight in any of the top categories, though it's well-represented in the technical categories (art direction, cinematography, sound mixing and editing,) when viewers usually get their pizza delivery.

Continuing a trend that's dominated the Oscars for a few years now, the films with the most high-profile nominations are either critical duds, box office underperformers — or both. "The Reader is a best picture (and director) nominee, and The Dark Knight is not," writes Caro with obvious disbelief. "Yes, the highbrow Holocaust film with lukewarm reviews is in the game!"

"Nominations for the Oscars were announced yesterday (and) absent was The Dark Knight, a film whose massive box office clearly inspired reverse esteem in the Academy's voters."

Even the best song category won't pull in viewers, as voters swatted away the chance to have Bruce Springsteen, Miley Cyrus, Beyoncé or even Clint Eastwood perform in favour of Peter Gabriel doing the credits song from Wall-E (i.e. the cue to head for the exits) and no less than two songs from Slumdog Millionaire, which will at least mean some Bollywood production values. It's at times like this that network executives outdo Hugo Chavez in their contempt for fickle, ungovernable democracy.

The 81st Annual Academy Awards

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

Rick's TVPicks

Battlestar Galactica

Air date: Jan. 23
Network: Space

Cancer, depression, demoralization, rebellion, cuckoldry; it's another happy hour on the non-stop party spaceship as the show picks up speed for the final stretch. **SPOILER ALERT:** At least no one dies.

Confessions of a Teen Idol

Air date: Jan. 25
Network: MuchMoreMusic

YOU might have heard of at least three of the seven men making a second lunge for fame in this VH1 reality show hosted by Scott Baio. One of them won't be the guy from the first season of The Real World.

Project Runway Canada

Air date: Jan. 27
Network: Global

THE Canadian franchise of the fashion reality show gets upgraded from Slice to the mother network for its second season. If nothing else, the show has done the nation a service by proving at least our fashion designers can be bitchy on a global standard.

–RICK MCGINNIS/ METRO CANADA

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FRIDAY 1/23/09

VA	Vu	SC	C		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	251	308	3	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Rick Mercer	Marketplace	Montreal Canadiens		CBC News: The National (N)		(:05) The Hour
	255	358	6	JOY	E News	The Insider	Smarter Than a 5th Grader?		Party Monsters: Cabo (CC)		20/20 (CC)		News (N)
	250	321	9	CTV	etalk (CC)	Hollywood	Ghost Whisperer (N) (CC)		Flashpoint (N) (CC)		Raising the Bar (N) (CC)		News (N)
	252	336	11	GTV	Entertainment	ET Canada	Howie Do It	Howie Do It	Friday Night Lights (N) (CC)		NUMB3RS (N) (CC)		News (N)
	256	389	12	VI	Instant Star	TMZ (N) (CC)	Wife Swap "Martin/Vallone"		Supernanny (N) (CC)		Stargate SG-1 "Talion" (CC)		News (CC)
	253	359	13	CITY	Law & Order: SVU		Mantracker	Mantracker	Survivorman (CC)		Crusoe (N) (CC)		EP Daily
	-	-	14	CW	Deal-No Deal	Deal-No Deal	Hates Chris	The Game (N)	13: Fear Is Real "Fort Fear"		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Frasier (CC)
	289	381	15	CBS	Entertainment	The Insider	Ghost Whisperer (N) (CC)		Flashpoint (N) (CC)		NUMB3RS (N) (CC)		News (N)
	287	379	16	NBC	Evening Mag.	Inside Edition	Howie Do It	Howie Do It	Friday Night Lights (N) (CC)		Dateline NBC (CC)		News (N)
	288	380	21	ABC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Wife Swap "Martin/Vallone"		Supernanny (N) (CC)		20/20 (CC)		KOMO 4 News
	290	382	23	FOX	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Smarter Than a 5th Grader?		Don't Forget the Lyrics! (N)		News (N)	Most Wanted	Family Guy
news	502	390	26	NW	CBC News: the fifth estate		CBC News: The National (N)		CBC News: The National		CBC News: the fifth estate		National
	500	500	33	CNN	Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)				Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)		Cooper 360
sports	407	419	22	RSP	World Cup Skiing: Women's		Hockey	Canucks TV	Best Damn Sports Show		Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Sportsnet
	400	400	30	TSN	NBA: Raptors at Bulls		SportsCentre		Tennis Australian Open -- Early Round -- Day 6. From Melbourne, Australia.				SportsCentre
family	552	543	25	YTV	Scorpion	Raise Your Voice ★★ (2004, Drama) Hilary Duff, Oliver James. (CC)					Falcon Beach (CC)		Mystery Hnt.
	555	545	50	TEL	Totally Spies	Total Drama	6TEEN	6TEEN	Misadventures	Futurama	Father	Chicken	Life's a Zoo
cable variety	268	354	5	KNO	Hockey: A People's History		Poirot (N) (CC)		Dalziel and Pascoe (N) (CC)		Bethune (CC)		Ladies
	575	583	20	CMT	Top 20 Steamiest Video		Broken Bridges ★ (2006, Drama) Toby Keith, Kelly Preston.				Broken Bridges ★ (2006, Drama) Toby Keith.		
	615	520	31	A&E	The Beast "Two Choices"		Criminal Minds "No Way Out"		CSI: Miami (CC)		CSI: Miami (CC)		The Beast
	521	560	34	TLC	Miss America: Countdown		What Not to Wear "Jennifer"		Miss America: Countdown		What Not to Wear "Jennifer"		Real Simple
	616	522	39	SHO	The Outer Limits (CC)		Da Vinci's Inquest (CC)		Testees (CC)	Kenny-Spenny	Webdreams	Sin Cities	Wife Swap
	294	650	47	TBS	(6:00) Men in Black II ★★		10 Items-Less	Sex and-City	Sex and-City	(:25) Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason ★★ (2004) (CC)			
	603	561	52	FN	Diner, Drive-In	Diner, Drive-In	Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares		Challenge (CC)		Kylie Kwong	Gourmets	Diner, Drive-In
	320	621	60	CEN	(6:30) Lethal Obsession (2007)		Stop-Loss ★★ (2008, Drama) Ryan Phillippe. Premiere. (CC)				The Nasty Show		Nasty Show 2
	581	566	101	MTV	The City	The City	City Live After	Girls-Latitude	The Real World "Brooklyn"		The City	The City	Made (CC)

SATURDAY 1/24/09

VA	Vu	SC	C		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	251	308	3	CBC	Canadiens	News (CC)	Pearl Harbor ★★ (2001, War) Ben Affleck. Friends join a war effort after the Japanese attack Hawaii. (CC)						
	255	358	6	JOY	Chef School	E News	A Life Interrupted (2007, Docudrama) Lea Thompson. (CC)				Show Yours	G-Spot (CC)	News (N)
	250	321	9	CTV	W-FIVE-Swans		Law & Order: Criminal Intent		CSI: NY "Admissions" (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent		News (N)
	252	336	11	GTV	Global Currents: Thin Ice		Zero Hour "Terror in Tokyo"		Mob Stories "Mob Mistress"		Go Deep "Subcity Explorers"		News (N)
	256	389	12	VI	New Canoe	Island Week	Kool Countdown (CC)		Lost "Because You Left; The Lie" (CC)				Bravo! Fact
	253	359	13	CITY	Without a Trace (CC)		Less-Kind	Kaya (CC)	Tornado Warning (2002) Gerald McRaney, Steve Braun. (CC)				Role
	-	-	14	CW	CSI: NY "Cool Hunter" (CC)		Boston Legal (CC)		Boston Legal (CC)		CSI: NY (CC)		CSI: Miami
	289	381	15	CBS	Entertainment Tonight (N)		Game Show	Game Show	CSI: NY "Admissions" (CC)		48 Hours Mystery (N) (CC)		News (N)
	287	379	16	NBC	Backroads	Inside Edition	Crusoe (N) (CC)		Figure Skating U.S. Championships -- Ladies Free Program.				News (N)
	288	380	21	ABC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy!	Lost "Destiny Calls" (CC)		Lost "Because You Left; The Lie" (CC)				KOMO 4 News
	290	382	23	FOX	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Cops (N) (PA)	Cops (CC)	America's Most Wanted		News (N)	Most Wanted	Talkshow
news	502	390	26	NW	Doc Zone (CC)		Sat. Report	Fortune	Sat. Report	Mansbridge	Doc Zone (CC)		Sat. Report
	500	500	33	CNN	D.L. Hughley-News		Newsroom		Larry King Live		D.L. Hughley-News		Newsroom
sports	407	419	22	RSP	Snowboard	UFC	Ultimate Fighting Championship 74: Respect (Taped) (CC)				Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Poker
	400	400	30	TSN	Tennis Australian Open -- Round of 16. From Melbourne, Australia. (Live) (CC)							SportsCentre	SportsCentre
family	552	543	25	YTV	Team Galaxy	Team Galaxy	Zixx Level	Storm Hawks	Naruto (CC)	Bleach (CC)	Ghost	Ghost	Mystery Hnt.
	555	545	50	TEL	Jetsons Meet the Flintstones ★★ (1987) Daws Butler (CC)				Carl2 (CC)	Futurama	Spaceballs ★★ (1987) Mel Brooks. (CC)		
cable variety	268	354	5	KNO	Planet Carnivore "Ice Bear"		Heartbeat "Hey, Hey LBJ" (N)		Midsomer Murders A woman is accused of killing a friend.				Montreal Jazz
	575	583	20	CMT	Dixie Chicks		Three Chords	Carrie	Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing (CC)				Three Chords
	615	520	31	A&E	The Beast "Two Choices"		The Sopranos (CC)		CSI: Miami "Double Cap"		CSI: Miami (CC)		The Beast
	521	560	34	TLC	Making Over America		Little People: Just Married		Miss America 2009 From Las Vegas. (CC)				Making Over
	616	522	39	SHO	Mutant X "Russian Roulette"		Every Second Counts (2008, Drama) Stephen Collins. (CC)				X-Men: The Last Stand ★★ (2006, Action)		
	294	650	47	TBS	(6:15) My Cousin Vinny ★★★ (1992) (CC)		(:45) Lethal Weapon 2 ★★★ (1989) (PA) Mel Gibson, Danny Glover. (CC)						Air Force One
	603	561	52	FN	Hell's Kitchen (CC)		The F Word		Top Chef "Restaurant Wars" Restaurants.			Good Eats	Hell's Kitchen
	320	621	60	CEN	U.S. of Tara	Secret Diary	Shine a Light ★★★ (2008) Mick Jagger. Premiere.				(:05) Transformers ★★★ (2007, Action) (CC)		
	581	566	101	MTV	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	MTV Live	MTV News	After

SUNDAY 1/25/09

VA	Vu	SC	C		7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	251	308	3	CBC	The Nature of Things (CC)		Miss Marple - The Moving Finger (2006) Geraldine McEwan.				CBC News: Sunday Night (N)		News (CC)
	255	358	6	JOY	Red Carpet Special: SAG		15th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards (Same-day Tape)				Inside Hollywood (CC)		News (CC)
	250	321	9	CTV	Star Wars Clo.	Degrassi: TNG	The Mentalist "Seeing Red"		The Bourne Supremacy ★★★ (2004) Matt Damon. (CC)				News (N)
	252	336	11	GTV	16:9 Picture	King of Hill	The Simpsons	The Simpsons	Family Guy	American Dad	Family Guy	Family Guy	News (N)
	256	389	12	VI	Funniest Home Videos		Cold Case "The Brush Man"		Hole in the Wall (CC)		Desperate Housewives (CC)		New Canoe
	253	359	13	CITY	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Tomorrow Never Dies ★★★ (1997) Pierce Brosnan, Jonathan Pryce. (CC)					Most Amazing	Role
	-	-	14	CW	Jericho "Crossroads" (CC)		Antitrust ★★ (2001) Ryan Phillippe, Rachael Leigh Cook.				Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Cold Case
	289	381	15	CBS	60 Minutes (CC)		Cold Case "The Brush Man"		Loving Leah (2009) Lauren Ambrose. Premiere. (CC)				News (N)
	287	379	16	NBC	(6:00) Dateline NBC (CC)		The Last Templar (2009) (Part 1 of 2) Mira Sorvino. Premiere.				Law & Order: Criminal Intent		News (N)
	288	380	21	ABC	Funniest Home Videos		Extreme Makeover: Home Edition "Tutwiler Family" (N) (CC)				Desperate Housewives (CC)		KOMO 4 News
	290	382	23	FOX	Smarter Than a 5th Grader?		The Simpsons	The Simpsons	Family Guy	American Dad	News (N)	Q It Up Sports	House (CC)
news	502	390	26	NW	Chicago 10 ★★★ (2007) Voices of Hank Azaria. (CC)				CBC News: Sunday Night		Chicago 10 ★★★ (2007) Dylan Baker (CC)		
	500	500	33	CNN	Newsroom		D.L. Hughley-News		Larry King Live		Newsroom		D.L. Hughley
sports	407	419	22	RSP	The Ultimate Fighter		Ultimate Fighting Championship 74: Respect (CC)				Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Sportsnet
	400	400	30	TSN	(6:30) World Extreme Cagefighting (Taped)				SportsCentre (Live) (CC)	NFL Films	Winter X-Games Classix (N)		SportsCentre
family	552	543	25	YTV	Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over		Prank Patrol	Prank Patrol	The Next Star		Adrenaline	Zixx Level	Mystery Hnt.
	555	545	50	TEL	Totally Spies	Totally Spies	6TEEN	6TEEN	Carl2	Futurama	Batman: Gotham Knight (2008, Action) (CC)		
cable variety	268	354	5	KNO	Doomsday Volcano (CC)		Doc Martin (CC)		Rebus "Question of Blood"		(:15) Dalziel and Pascoe (N)		Montreal Jazz
	575	583	20	CMT	Three Chords	Three Chords	Cheerleader Nation		Cheerleaders	Cheerleaders	Three Chords	Three Chords	Cheerleader
	615	520	31	A&E	CSI: Miami (CC)		The Beast "Two Choices"		CSI: Miami (CC)		CSI: Miami "Raising Caine"		CSI: Miami
	521	560	34	TLC	Say Yes to the Dress		17 Kids-Count	17 Kids-Count	A Very Duggar Wedding		Say Yes to the Dress		17 Kids-Count
	616	522	39	SHO	The Guard "The Beacon"		New Waterford Girl ★★★ (1999) Liane Balaban. (CC)				Damages (CC)		The Guard
	294	650	47	TBS	Dumb & Dumber ★★ (1994) Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels. (CC)				Varsity Blues ★★ (1999) James Van Der Beek. (CC)				Striking Dist.
	603	561	52	FN	The Next Food Network Star		The Heat	The Heat	Challenge "Cereal Bridges"		Iron Chef America (CC)		Next Star
	320	621	60	CEN	(6:00) Sydney White ★★ (CC)		Three Chords	Three Chords	Drillbit Taylor ★★ (2008) Owen Wilson. (CC)		(:45) Ocean's Thirteen ★★★		
	581	566	101	MTV	Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	After	Girls-Latitude	Made "Pop Singer" (CC)		Cribs (CC)	Cribs (CC)	City Live After

Mendes is most desirable woman, says poll

Eva Mendes has been named the most desirable woman of 2009 by AskMen.com, femalefirst.co.uk reports. The Spirit actress topped a poll of men who were asked to name their ideal woman. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Celebrity Buzz

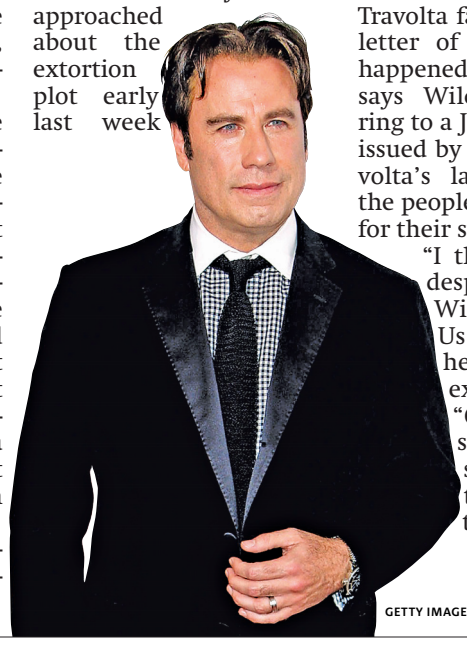
Police investigate extortion attempt

INVESTIGATION Police in the Bahamas have launched an investigation surrounding an attempt to extort money from John Travolta's family, Obie Wilchcombe, a member of the Bahamian Parliament, confirmed to Us-magazine.com.

The full details of the plot have not been released, but Us magazine quotes Wilchcombe as saying only one person — not two, which has been reported — is involved. A Bahamian newspaper, The Tribune, has suggested that the extortion attempt is connected to the recent loss of 16-year-old Jett Travolta, who died of a seizure disorder Jan. 2 at the family's vacation home in the Bahamas.

Wilchcombe denied reports that the person behind the plot is a politician. "The lawyer who brought the situation to my attention is a politician," he clarifies.

Wilchcombe says he was approached about the extortion plot early last week and passed along the information to Travolta's lawyers, Michael Ossi and Michael McDermott, us-magazine.com adds.



"The irony was that the Travolta family just sent a letter of gratitude — it happened that afternoon," says Wilchcombe, referring to a Jan. 12 statement issued by McDermott, Travolta's lawyer, thanking the people of the Bahamas for their support.

"I thought it was a despicable act," Wilchcombe tells Us when he first heard news of the extortion plot. "One person should not destroy the character of the country."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

Aniston turning 40

PEOPLE Jennifer Aniston is planning a star-studded 40th birthday party, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The former Friends actress, who reaches the landmark age on Feb. 11, wants to celebrate early with a lavish bash at her new Beverly Hills home on Feb. 7.

The guest list will include Jennifer's boyfriend John Mayer, her close pal Courteney Cox and her husband David Arquette and singer Sheryl Crow.

It is believed the actress is planning the early festivities because John wants to take her away for a romantic break for her actual birthday.

The pair will leave for their intimate getaway — which will also take in Valentine's Day — straight after the party.

Rumours are rife that John is set to propose on Jennifer's big day, and has splashed out on a custom-made engagement ring for her.

Jennifer recently revealed she was looking forward to the milestone and isn't scared of getting older

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Federline packs on the pounds

HEALTH Kevin Federline appears to have packed on major pounds, usmagazine.com reports.

He showed off a fuller figure while golfing with a pal in Los Angeles Tuesday. His ex Shar Jackson explained to Us magazine last March that the 31-year-old rapper (who looked chunky last year) 31, had "daddy weight! When you are a full time parent, sometimes you can't focus on you."

Meanwhile, Federline's romance with volleyball player Victoria Prince, 26, seems to be heating up.

TMZ.com reports that she took Sean Preston, 3, and Jayden James, 2, out for dinner in Fresno, Calif., over the weekend.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Perry takes vow of celibacy?

RUMOUR Katy Perry is taking a vow of celibacy, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The I Kissed a Girl singer has revealed she won't be smooching anyone this year, after splitting from Gym Class Heroes frontman Travis McCoy.

When Grammy-nominated Katy, 24, was asked who she would like to kiss at the upcoming awards, she said: "I've actually taken a vow of celibacy this year ... no kissing anyone.

"Just my cat, Kitty Purry."

Katy and Travis' two-year romance is believed to have ended amid a flurry of arguments.

A source said: "It's sad, but they were fighting a lot in recent months because they never saw each other.

"When somebody becomes very famous very quickly their relationship usually suffers. She's going through such a huge time at the moment so needs to be on her own."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Depp's partner returns ring

RELATIONSHIP Johnny Depp's long-term partner Vanessa Paradis has returned an engagement ring he bought her, people.com reports.

The Pirates of the Caribbean star was recently spotted shopping for the band in California, but Vanessa — who he has been with for 10 years — reportedly took it back as she was unhappy with the design.

A source said: "Johnny got Vanessa a drop-dead gorgeous engagement band but she returned it to the jeweller. She wants her ring to be absolutely perfect."

The couple are yet to officially announce they are planning to tie the knot, but are rumoured to be marrying in April.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Hudson set to return to the spotlight

CAREER After dropping out of the public eye following her family murder tragedy, Jennifer Hudson now has the strength and the will to give three high-profile performances next month, a source close to her tells People magazine.

"So much has happened, but she's ready," people.com quotes the source as saying. "It's a new year, she's excited about performing again. She knew it was time."

Hudson, 27, will deliver the National Anthem at the Super Bowl on Feb. 1, then sing at the MusiCares Person of the Year Gala Feb. 6 and at the Grammys two days later.

The performances will be the first since her mother, brother and nephew were murdered in the fall. Her estranged brother-in-law has pleaded innocent to the killings.

The source close to the Grammy-nominated Hudson says "there wasn't really a moment" that she decided to perform again, but, that "fans can expect the Jennifer they've come to love. She just really loves to perform; it's who she is, it's what she does."

The source adds: "I just admire her strength. Not many people could go through all that's happened and shown the strength she has."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Kardashian happy about Razzie

CAREER For Kim Kardashian, it's great just to be nominated — even if it is for a Razzie, people.com reports.

"I'm having a really good laugh," the actress writes on her blog. "I had so much fun filming Disaster Movie and giggled the entire time during the shoot."

The reality star, 28, adds, "There is steep competition in my worst supporting actress category, I have to admit ... including my fantastic co-star Carmen Electra (you go girl!) Leelee Sobieski (what a surprise!), Jenny McCarthy (really?) and Paris Hilton (who could technically sweep this year's awards with a whopping three nominations)."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Oprah celebrates with Obamas

PEOPLE While she might not have hosted a fancy inauguration party herself, Oprah Winfrey did get to celebrate the occasion with Barack and Michelle Obama.

According to the Chicago Sun-Times, the new president and first lady capped off their big day just before 1 a.m. with a private champagne toast at the White House with a very select group of friends — including Winfrey, a vocal supporter of Obama throughout the campaign.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Saturday Variable 2° / -3°

Sunday Flurries 60% 1°/ -4°

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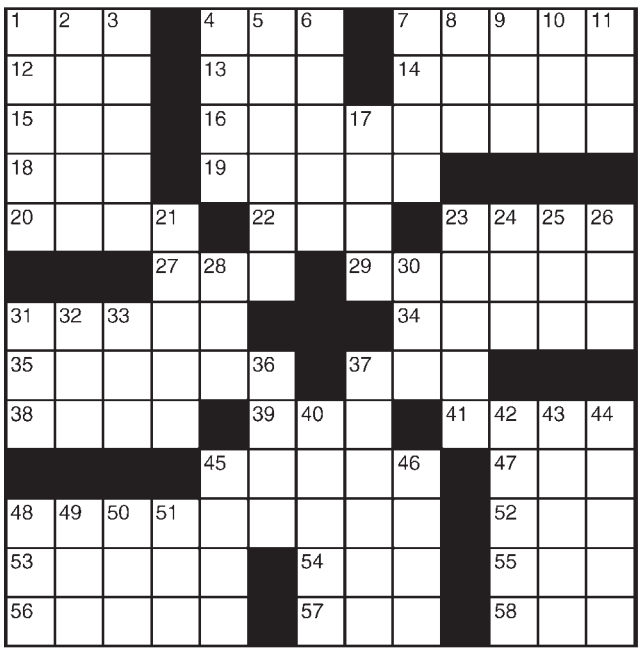

Crossword across

1 Hot tub
4 Chances, for short
7 Blubbers
12 Dress (up)
13 Dance flourish
14 Say one's piece
15 Lord's Prayer start
16 Noted newsweekly, with "The"
18 Lemieux milieu
19 Toaster's word
20 Masticate
22 Screw up
23 Test the waters
27 Choose
29 December stone
31 Point of view
34 Dastardly one
35 Chat
37 Fool
38 Authentic
39 Every iota
41 Drink too much
45 Thwart
47 Upper limit
48 1969 Fellini movie
52 Greek vowel
53 Bewildered
54 Rd.
55 Solidify
56 Energetic
57 Wrangler rival
58 Skill

Crossword down

1 Unemotional
2 Joey's place?
3 Match
4 Wordsworth works
5 Type of fence
6 Animal track
7 "Groovy"
8 Spinning meas.
9 Midafternoon, on a sundial
10 Em halves
11 Collection
17 Bygone game-show host Jack
21 "The Right Stuff" author
23 Watch this space?
24 Expert
25 "SNL" announcer Pardo
26 Remnant
28 Shell game item
30 Conditions
31 Performance
32 Neither mate
33 Wildebeest
36 Indonesian island
37 Niche
40 Lifelong resident
42 Alpha's antithesis
43 Dad, in Devonshire
44 Put on a pedestal
45 Talk like 37-Across?
46 Banjo supporter
48 Chucklehead
49 Foolhardiness personified
50 1/6 fl. oz.
51 "Uh-huh"

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

					2	7		
			1	6		5		
1	6	9				8		
9			7		6		8	
	4						1	
	8		4		9			7
		3				4	2	5
		2		5	8			
		5	3					

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

Y	A	O	■	A	G	E	S	■	F	L	A	P
E	M	U	■	N	I	C	E	■	L	I	N	E
S	I	T	T	I	G	H	T	■	A	M	E	N
■	■	R	U	M	■	O	U	R	T	O	W	N
T	R	I	B	A	L	■	P	I	C	■	■	■
B	U	G	■	L	I	T	■	V	A	M	P	S
A	S	H	Y	■	P	O	I	■	R	I	O	T
R	E	T	I	E	■	O	L	D	■	D	N	A
■	■	■	D	A	M	■	K	E	E	N	E	R
I	C	E	D	T	E	A	■	A	L	I	■	■
M	A	G	I	■	T	W	I	L	I	G	H	T
A	M	O	S	■	R	A	R	E	■	H	O	I
M	E	S	H	■	O	Y	E	R	■	T	E	X

5	7	3	1	4	8	6	2	9
8	9	4	5	6	2	1	7	3
6	1	2	7	3	9	4	5	8
2	5	1	9	7	4	8	3	6
3	4	8	6	2	5	9	1	7
9	6	7	3	8	1	5	4	2
4	8	6	2	1	3	7	9	5
7	3	9	4	5	6	2	8	1
1	2	5	8	9	7	3	6	4

Find today's answers + play more games at metronews.ca

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:
Under 13 min .....Genius
13-17 min.....Scholar
17-21 min .....Smart
21-25 min .....Not bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day

Cornish Beef Pockets

PASTRY INGREDIENTS:
3 1/3 cups (825 ml) plain flour
Salt
1/2 lb (250 g) butter, chilled and diced

FILLING INGREDIENTS:
11 oz (350 g) lean chuck steak, diced
1 onion, chopped
1 potato, peeled and diced
6 oz (175 g), butternut squash, peeled and diced
1 1/2 tbsp (20 ml) beef stock
2 tbsp (25 ml) chopped fresh parsley
Salt and pepper
Beaten egg, to brush
1 garlic clove, chopped
3/4 in. (2 cm) piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
1 red chili pepper, seeded and chopped

METHOD:
1. Pastry: Sift flour and pinch of salt into large bowl. Rub in butter with fingertips until mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Sprinkle 6 tbsp (90 ml) chilled water over mixture, then mix in. If dough seems dry, add more water. Gather dough then lightly knead until smooth. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate 20 minutes before using.
2. Filling: Put steak, onion, potato, squash, stock and parsley in bowl. Season with salt and pepper and mix well.
3. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C). Divide pastry into eight pieces. Roll out each to an 8-in. (20-cm) round.
4. Spoon equal amounts of filling onto centre of each pastry round. Brush edges with egg, then bring together at top. Press edges firmly together to seal, then crimp.
5. Place pockets on two non-stick baking trays. Brush with beaten egg. Make small holes in tops to let steam out.
6. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 325 F (160 C); cook 45 minutes to 1 hour, until pastry is golden and filling is cooked. Serve hot, warm or cold.

SERVES 8

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to **rd.ca** or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**

Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
You'll disagree with a practical person. Problems may thwart your plan to meet someone. Don't insist on talking about flirtations.

TAURUS
APRIL 21-MAY 21
Laughing is better than arguing with a misery-guts. Try to understand that a woman is tempted. Have fun with an old friend.

GEMINI
MAY 22-JUNE 21
A non-stop talker will stand up for you. Nobody can diminish your high spirits. Change your routines to avoid seeing a jerk.

CANCER
JUNE 22-JULY 22
Take a thrilling new direction after a phone call. Water problems can cause distress. Don't be hoodwinked by momentary rewards.

LEO
JULY 23-AUG 23
People will be riled up by unreliable gossip. Be careful what you put in e-mails. Exhaustion has unforeseen consequences.

VIRGO
AUG 24-SEPT 22
A flirtation will result from a strong emotional connection. Your heart's desire can be fulfilled. Dreadful behaviour will cause you to feel insecure.

LIBRA
SEPT 23-OCT 23
You'll advise someone to avoid taking risks. Find the strength to speak out about respect. Quiet moments will ease your weary spirit.

SCORPIO
OCT 24-NOV 22
Your nurturing strengthens a weak man. Your daily life is being challenged by a stupid mistake. There'll be no secret messages.

SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23-DEC 21
A breathtaking adventure will change your outlook. End an awkward situation immediately. You can have a good impact on an idiot.

CAPRICORN
DEC 22-JAN 20
You can be certain of a chance for glory. An interesting story will explain poor behaviour. You'll struggle to strengthen an emotional bond.

AQUARIUS
JAN 21-FEB 18
Don't lose sleep over a minor problem. You have the courage to do fascinating things. Take other people's wickedness into account.

PISCES
FEB 19-MARCH 20
A friend's defiance will result in more respect. Don't take chances with your health. An elder is suffering from embarrassment.

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